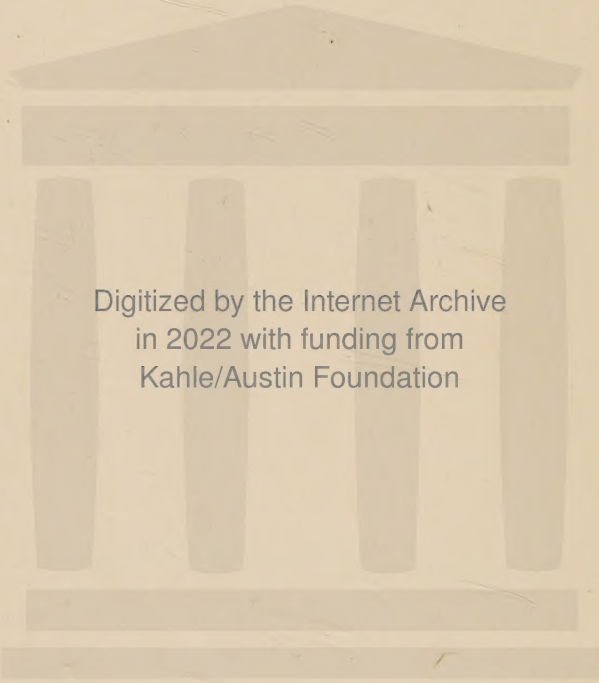
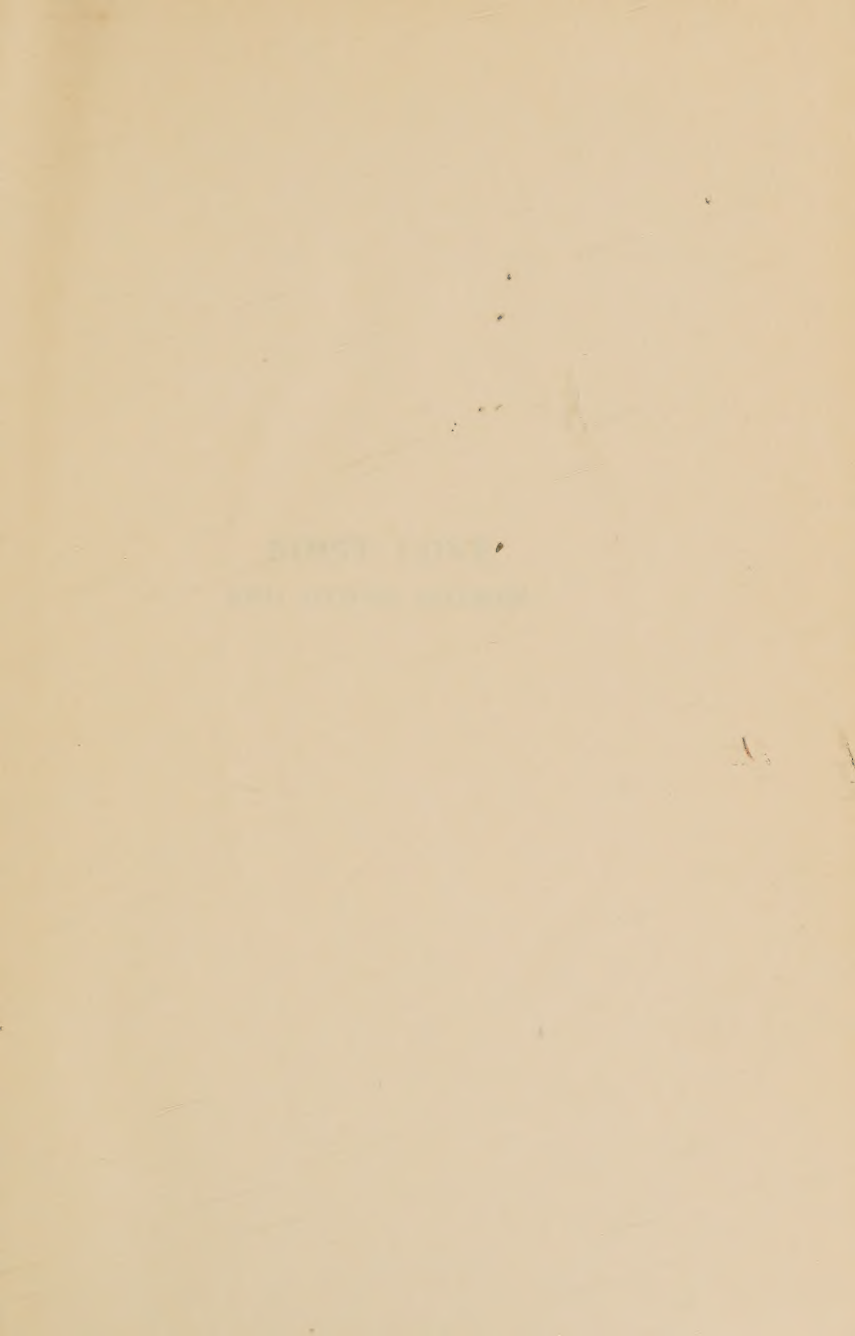


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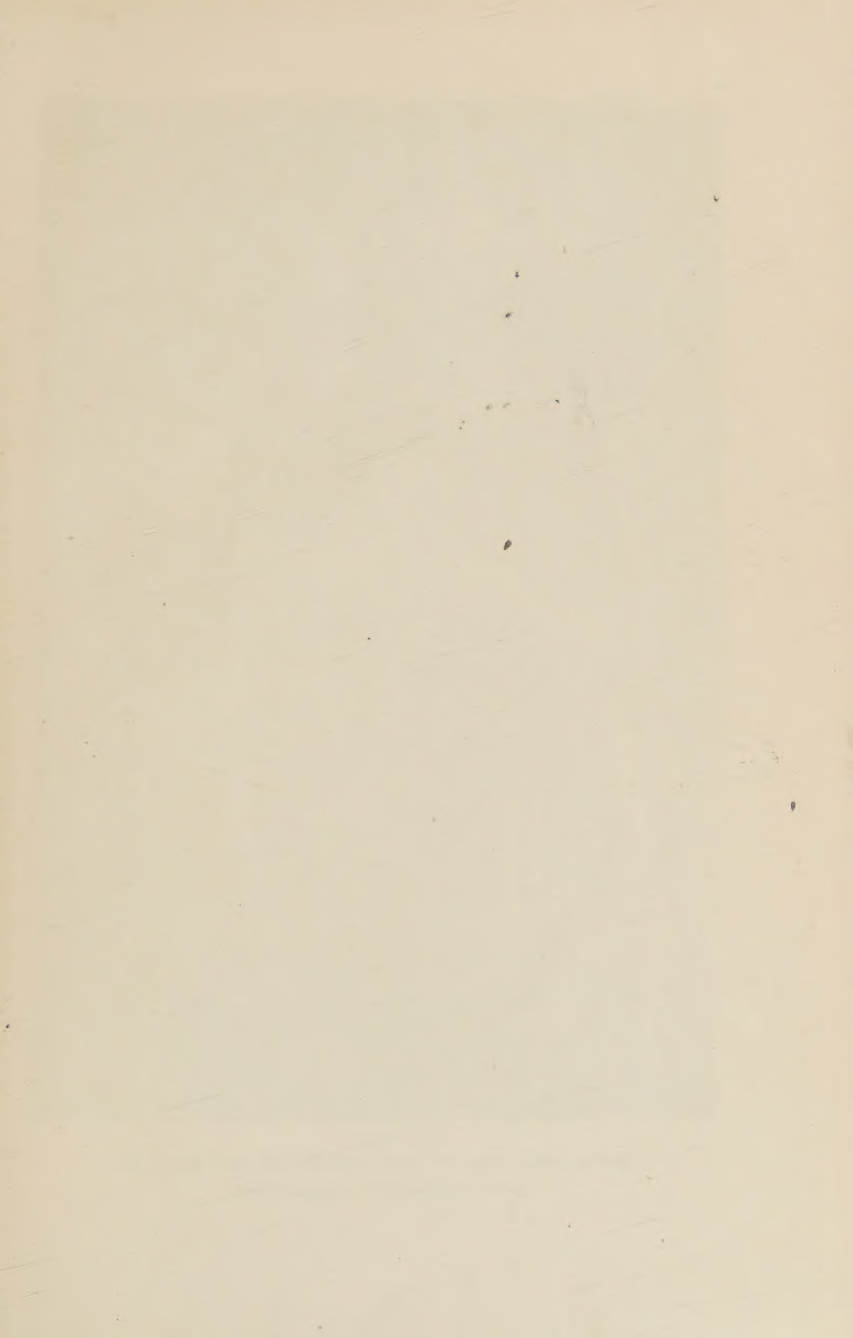




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FIRST LOVE
AND OTHER STORIES





"Recite some poetry to me," said Zinaida in a low voice
From a drawing by W. Sherman Potts

THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
IVAN TURGENIEFF

FIRST LOVE
AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

16 520

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCHMIDT'S SONS

1928



Early white post, to

1880

THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

V. 12-13

FIRST LOVE AND OTHER STORIES

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ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

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PREFACE

THE novel "First Love" was Turgénieff's favourite work, as he more than once confessed. What the author prized in this purely intimate but beautifully finished story was its fidelity to actuality; that is to say, he prized the personal recollections of early youth. In that respect this story has a prominent interest for readers, since it narrates—according to the testimony of the author—an actual fact in his life, and that without the slightest artificial colouring.¹ To what degree Turgénieff's testimony is credible, remarks one critic, is a question which can be rightly decided only by biographical documents. Famous writers are particularly inclined by nature to romantic coquetry with their own personalities—a characteristic which was, apparently, to some extent, inherent in Turgénieff, despite his renowned modesty. Famous writers are fond of leading their contemporaries—and still more posterity—astray with regard to the reflection of intimate details of their lives in their artistic

¹ The well-known poet Yákov Petrovitch Polónsky is the authority for this statement, in his "Recollections of Turgénieff," printed in the early numbers of the *Niva* for 1884.—TRANSLATOR.

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works. . . . At any rate, Russian artistic productions, in which the authors have endeavoured to set forth biographical details, must be scrutinised with extreme cautiousness. The author, while imagining that he is thoroughly sincere, may involuntarily indulge in inventions concerning himself. But in its literary aspect this story indubitably is one of Turgénieff's masterpieces, and in it the original character of its chief heroine, Princess Zinaída Zasyékin, is depicted with remarkable clearness and charm. . . . The artist threw off this light and elegant little intimate study by way of relaxation after "On the Eve," a romance dealing with a broad social problem, and by way of preparation for a new work, still more serious in intention, "Fathers and Children."

"First Love" does not contain any social types, does not deal with any social problems. It consists wholly, so to speak, of poetry. The young Princess is one of the author's most poetical creations. Her character is depicted with marvellous grace and elegance in the little scenes which exert so great an influence over her sixteen-year-old admirer. In this young man's father Turgénieff sketched his own father, who did not love his wife, and whose domestic relations were identical with those here described. His wife was considerably younger than he, and he had married her for her money. One curious

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detail concerns the Pole, Malévsky. This “dubious Count, swindler, and, in general, dirty little gentleman,” as one critic expresses it, “drawn with great artistic vivacity, and with unconcealed scorn, is a very typical figure; and such repulsive Poles were formerly encountered in great numbers in Holy Russia,—and are still to be met with. In this character are concentrated the unpleasant characteristics of the Polish national character: spiritual deceitfulness, double-facedness, insignificance, courtliness, and a tendency to revolting intrigue.”

In “A Correspondence” we again encounter one of Turgénieff’s favourite types, the superfluous man. But the author has taken a stride in advance with Alexyéi Petróvitch. In this case the superfluous man does not blame either the insipidity of life, or society, or people alone,—he blames himself. In Márya Alexándrovna’s friend and correspondent we behold a good and worthy man, cultured in both mind and heart,—but, like many others among Turgénieff’s heroes, suffering, so to speak, from a malady of the will. One critic declares that this story is almost identical, on its exterior, with “Rúdin.” One of the Russian representatives of “the loftiest aspirations” enters into correspondence with a young girl who, as people were fond of expressing it at that period, belonged among the “choice natures.” Disillusioned with life, she is ready to

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submit to the conditions which encompass her. Under the influence of an ill-defined impulse of affection and sympathy toward this young girl, the hero begins to inflate her sense of being an elect person, and to stir up her energy to contend with the humdrum circle in which she dwells. Just at the moment when he has awakened her courage and her hope that he will join her in this conflict, he stumbles and falls himself, in the most pusillanimous manner. His will is ailing.

Another point worth noting is that in the heroine's third letter the note of the so-called "woman's question" is sounded with remarkable feeling and force.

The explanation vouchsafed by one critic for the prevalence of weak men in Turgénieff's romances, in connection with "A Correspondence," is that the author did not depict strong natures simply because he did not find suitable material for that purpose in the circle which surrounded him. He was determined to draw the best men of his time as he found them—that is to say, men addicted to self-conviction, fiery in language, but weak in resolution.

"The Region of Dead Calm" was written while Turgénieff was forbidden to leave his estate at Spásskoe-Lutovínovo, after his release from the imprisonment wherewith he was punished for having published in Moscow a eulogy of Gógol which the St. Petersburg censor had

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prohibited. His idea that all men are divided into two categories which, respectively, possess more or less of the characteristics of Hamlet and of Don Quixote, is illustrated again in this story by Véretyeff, who ruins his talents and his life with liquor.

On the other hand, as one critic says, "positively, in the whole of Russian literature, we do not meet elsewhere such a grand, massive, severe, and somewhat coarse woman as Márya Pávlovna." Másha is the first woman in Russian literature to look upon man as a worker, and to treat him with intelligent exaction. Another strange characteristic in a young lady of the remote country districts is Másha's dislike for "sweet" poetry. Her suicide is not a proof that her character was weak. And of the two weak men in the story, Astákhoff is the weaker, the more colourless, in every way—as to character, not as to the author's portraiture.

The pictures of country life among the landed gentry are drawn with great charm and delicate humour.

That Turgénieff was affected, and very sensibly so, by the lack of comprehension evinced by both critics and readers toward his great work "Fathers and Children," is evident, in part, from the characteristic lyrical fragment, "It is Enough." It is filled with mournful pessimism of a romantic sort, which strongly recalls the pes-

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simism of Leopardi. A certain element of comedy is imparted to this sentimental outpouring by the fact that the author fancied (and, probably, with entire sincerity) that he bore a strong resemblance in his convictions to Bazároff, his creation. Dostoiévsky depicted this comic element very caustically, in the most malicious of parodies on Turgénieff in general and on "It is Enough" and "Phantoms" in particular. This parody is contained in his romance "Devils," and constitutes one of the most venomous pages in that decidedly venomous romance. The following is an excerpt: "In the meantime, the mist swirled and swirled, and swirled round and round until it bore more resemblance to a million pillows than to mist. And suddenly everything vanishes, and a great Genius crosses the Volga in winter, during a thaw. Two and a half pages about this transit. But, notwithstanding, he tumbles into a hole in the ice. The Genius goes to the bottom. Do you think he drowns? Not a bit of it! All this is for the sake, after he is completely foundered and is beginning to choke, of making a block of ice, a tiny block, about the size of a pea, but clear and transparent, float past him 'like a frozen tear'; and on that block of ice Germany, or, to put it more accurately, the sky of Germany, is reflected; and by the rainbow play of that reflection it reminds him of the tear which—dost thou remember?—trickled from thine eyes

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when we sat under the emerald tree, and thou didst joyfully exclaim: 'There is no crime!'—'Yes!' said I through my tears; 'but if that is so, then assuredly there are no righteous men either.' We fell to sobbing and parted forever."

"The Dog" was first published in the feuilleton of the *Petersburg News*, No. 85, 1865. It is generally admitted to be one of Turgénieff's weak and unsuccessful works. But one critic describes how enthralling it was when the author narrated it (in advance of publication) to a group of friends in Moscow, and what a deep impression it made upon them. "When I read it afterward in print," he says, "it seemed to me a pale copy of Turgénieff's verbal narration. One was impressed with the idea that, when he sat down to write it, he was overcome with apprehension lest his readers and critics should suppose that he believed in this mysterious adventure. But conviction on the part of the author—in appearance at least—is precisely what is required in such cases. He told the tale with enthusiasm, and even turned pale, and his face assumed a cast of fear at the dramatic points." The critic adds that he could not get to sleep for hours afterward.

I. F. H.

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FIRST LOVE,

(1860)

FIRST LOVE.

THE guests had long since departed. The clock had struck half-past twelve. There remained in the room only the host, Sergyéi Nikoláévitch, and Vladímir Petróvitch.

The host rang and ordered the remains of the supper to be removed.—“So then, the matter is settled,”—he said, ensconcing himself more deeply in his arm-chair, and lighting a cigar:—“each of us is to narrate the history of his first love. ’T is your turn, Sergyéi Nikoláévitch.”

Sergyéi Nikoláévitch, a rather corpulent man, with a plump, fair-skinned face, first looked at the host, then raised his eyes to the ceiling.—“I had no first love,”—he began at last:—“I began straight off with the second.”

“How was that?”

“Very simply. I was eighteen years of age when, for the first time, I dangled after a very charming young lady; but I courted her as though it were no new thing to me: exactly as I courted others afterward. To tell the truth, I fell in love, for the first and last time, at the age of six, with my nurse;—but that is a very long time ago. The details of our relations have been erased from my

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memory; but even if I remembered them, who would be interested in them?"

"Then what are we to do?"—began the host.—"There was nothing very startling about my first love either; I never fell in love with any one before Anna Ivánovna, now my wife; and everything ran as though on oil with us; our fathers made up the match, we very promptly fell in love with each other, and entered the bonds of matrimony without delay. My story can be told in two words. I must confess, gentlemen, that in raising the question of first love, I set my hopes on you, I will not say old, but yet no longer young bachelors. Will not you divert us with something, Vladímir Petróvitch?"

"My first love belongs, as a matter of fact, not altogether to the ordinary category,"—replied, with a slight hesitation, Vladímir Petróvitch, a man of forty, whose black hair was sprinkled with grey.

"Ah!"—said the host and Sergyéi Nikoláevitch in one breath.—"So much the better. . . . Tell us."

"As you like . . . or no: I will not narrate; I am no great hand at telling a story; it turns out dry and short, or long-drawn-out and artificial. But if you will permit me, I will write down all that I remember in a note-book, and will read it aloud to you."

At first the friends would not consent, but

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Vladímir Petróvitch insisted on having his own way. A fortnight later they came together again, and Vladímir Sergyéitch kept his promise.

This is what his note-book contained.

I

I WAS sixteen years old at the time. The affair took place in the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow, in my parents' house. They had hired a villa near the Kalúga barrier, opposite the Neskútny Park.¹—I was preparing for the university, but was working very little and was not in a hurry.

No one restricted my freedom. I had done whatever I pleased ever since I had parted with my last French governor, who was utterly unable to reconcile himself to the thought that he had fallen "like a bomb" (*comme une bombe*) into Russia, and with a stubborn expression on his face, wallowed in bed for whole days at a time. My father treated me in an indifferently-affectionate way; my mother paid hardly any attention to me, although she had no children except me: other cares engrossed her. My father, still a young man and very handsome, had married her

¹ The finest of the public parks in Moscow, situated near the famous Sparrow Hills, is called "Neskútny"—"Not Tiresome," generally rendered "Sans Souci." It contains an imperial residence, the Alexander Palace, used as an official summer home by the Governor-General of Moscow.—TRANSLATOR.

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from calculation; she was ten years older than he. My mother led a melancholy life: she was incessantly in a state of agitation, jealousy, and wrath—but not in the presence of my father; she was very much afraid of him, and he maintained a stern, cold, and distant manner. . . I have never seen a man more exquisitely calm, self-confident, and self-controlled.

I shall never forget the first weeks I spent at the villa. The weather was magnificent; we had left town the ninth of May, on St. Nicholas's day. I rambled,—sometimes in the garden of our villa, sometimes in Neskútchny Park, sometimes beyond the city barriers; I took with me some book or other,—a course of Kaidánoff,—but rarely opened it, and chiefly recited aloud poems, of which I knew a great many by heart. The blood was fermenting in me, and my heart was aching—so sweetly and absurdly; I was always waiting for something, shrinking at something, and wondering at everything, and was all ready for anything at a moment's notice. My fancy was beginning to play, and hovered swiftly ever around the selfsame image, as martins hover round a belfry at sunset. But even athwart my tears and athwart the melancholy, inspired now by a melodious verse, now by the beauty of the evening, there peered forth, like grass in springtime, the joyous sensation of young, bubbling life.

I had a saddle-horse; I was in the habit of sad-

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dling it myself, and when I rode off alone as far as possible, in some direction, launching out at a gallop and fancying myself a knight at a tourney—how blithely the wind whistled in my ears!—Or, turning my face skyward, I welcomed its beaming light and azure into my open soul.

I remember, at that time, the image of woman, the phantom of woman's love, almost never entered my mind in clearly-defined outlines; but in everything I thought, in everything I felt, there lay hidden the half-conscious, shamefaced presentiment of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine

This presentiment, this expectation permeated my whole being; I breathed it, it coursed through my veins in every drop of blood it was fated to be speedily realised.

Our villa consisted of a wooden manor-house with columns, and two tiny outlying wings; in the wing to the left a tiny factory of cheap wall-papers was installed. . . . More than once I went thither to watch how half a score of gaunt, dishevelled young fellows in dirty smocks and with tipsy faces were incessantly galloping about at the wooden levers which jammed down the square blocks of the press, and in that manner, by the weight of their puny bodies, printed the motley-hued patterns of the wall-papers. The wing on the right stood empty and was for rent. One day—three weeks after the ninth of May—the

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shutters on the windows of this wing were opened, and women's faces made their appearance in them; some family or other had moved into it. I remember how, that same day at dinner, my mother inquired of the butler who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasyékin, said at first, not without some respect:—"Ah! a Princess" . . . and then she added:—"She must be some poor person!"

"They came in three hired carriages, ma'am,"—remarked the butler, as he respectfully presented a dish. "They have no carriage of their own, ma'am, and their furniture is of the very plainest sort."

"Yes,"—returned my mother,—"and nevertheless, it is better so."

My father shot a cold glance at her; she subsided into silence.

As a matter of fact, Princess Zasyékin could not be a wealthy woman: the wing she had hired was so old and tiny and low-roofed that people in the least well-to-do would not have been willing to inhabit it.—However, I let this go in at one ear and out at the other. The princely title had little effect on me: I had recently been reading Schiller's "The Brigands."

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II

I HAD a habit of prowling about our garden every evening, gun in hand, and standing guard against the crows.—I had long cherished a hatred for those wary, rapacious and crafty birds. On the day of which I have been speaking, I went into the garden as usual, and, after having fruitlessly made the round of all the alleys (the crows recognised me from afar, and merely cawed spasmodically at a distance), I accidentally approached the low fence which separated *our* territory from the narrow strip of garden extending behind the right-hand wing and appertaining to it. I was walking along with drooping head. Suddenly I heard voices: I glanced over the fence—and was petrified. . . . A strange spectacle presented itself to me.

A few paces distant from me, on a grass-plot between green raspberry-bushes, stood a tall, graceful young girl, in a striped, pink frock and with a white kerchief on her head; around her pressed four young men, and she was tapping them in turn on the brow with those small grey flowers, the name of which I do not know, but which are familiar to children; these little flowers form tiny sacs, and burst with a pop when they are struck against anything hard. The young men offered their foreheads to her so willingly,

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and in the girl's movements (I saw her form in profile) there was something so bewitching, caressing, mocking, and charming, that I almost cried aloud in wonder and pleasure; and I believe I would have given everything in the world if those lovely little fingers had only consented to tap me on the brow. My gun slid down on the grass, I forgot everything, I devoured with my eyes that slender waist, and the neck and the beautiful arms, and the slightly ruffled fair hair, the intelligent eyes and those lashes, and the delicate cheek beneath them. . . .

"Young man, hey there, young man!"—suddenly spoke up a voice near me:—"Is it permissible to stare like that at strange young ladies?"

I trembled all over, I was stupefied. . . . Beside me, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with closely-clipped black hair, gazing ironically at me. At that same moment, the young girl turned toward me. . . . I beheld huge grey eyes in a mobile, animated face—and this whole face suddenly began to quiver, and to laugh, and the white teeth gleamed from it, the brows elevated themselves in an amusing way. . . . I flushed, picked up my gun from the ground, and, pursued by ringing but not malicious laughter, I ran to my own room, flung myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands. My heart was fairly leaping within me; I felt very much

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ashamed and very merry: I experienced an unprecedented emotion.

After I had rested awhile, I brushed my hair, made myself neat and went down-stairs to tea. The image of the young girl floated in front of me; my heart had ceased to leap, but ached in an agreeable sort of way.

“What ails thee?”—my father suddenly asked me:—“hast thou killed a crow?”

I was on the point of telling him all, but refrained and only smiled to myself. As I was preparing for bed, I whirled round, thrice on one foot, I know not why, pomaded my hair, got into bed and slept all night like a dead man. Toward morning I awoke for a moment, raised my head, cast a glance of rapture around me—and fell asleep again.

III

“How am I to get acquainted with them?” was my first thought, as soon as I awoke in the morning. I went out into the garden before tea, but did not approach too close to the fence, and saw no one. After tea I walked several times up and down the street in front of the villa, and cast a distant glance at the windows. . . . I thought I descried *her* face behind the curtains, and retreated with all possible despatch. “But I must get acquainted,”—I thought, as I walked with ir-

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regular strides up and down the sandy stretch which extends in front of the Neskútchny Park "but how? that is the question." I recalled the most trifling incidents of the meeting on the previous evening; for some reason, her manner of laughing at me presented itself to me with particular clearness. . . . But while I was fretting thus and constructing various plans, Fate was already providing for me.

During my absence, my mother had received a letter from her new neighbour on grey paper sealed with brown wax, such as is used only on postal notices, and on the corks of cheap wine. In this letter, written in illiterate language, and with a slovenly chirography, the Princess requested my mother to grant her her protection: my mother, according to the Princess's words, was well acquainted with the prominent people on whom the fortune of herself and her children depended, as she had some extremely important law-suits: "I apeal tyou,"—she wrote,—"as a knoble woman to a knoble woman, and moarover, it is agriable to me to makeus of this oportunity." In conclusion, she asked permission of my mother to call upon her. I found my mother in an unpleasant frame of mind: my father was not at home, and she had no one with whom to take counsel. It was impossible not to reply to a "knoble woman," and to a Princess into the bargain; but how to reply perplexed my mother.

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It seemed to her ill-judged to write a note in French, and my mother was not strong in Russian orthography herself—and was aware of the fact—and did not wish to compromise herself. She was delighted at my arrival, and immediately ordered me to go to the Princess and explain to her verbally that my mother was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to be of service to Her Radiance,¹ and begged that she would call upon her about one o'clock.

This unexpectedly swift fulfilment of my secret wishes both delighted and frightened me; but I did not betray the emotion which held possession of me, and preliminarily betook myself to my room for the purpose of donning a new neck-cloth and coat; at home I went about in a round-jacket and turn-over collars, although I detested them greatly.

IV

IN the cramped and dirty anteroom of the wing, which I entered with an involuntary trembling of my whole body, I was received by a grey-haired old serving-man with a face the hue of dark copper, pig-like, surly little eyes, and such deep wrinkles on his forehead as I had never seen before in my life. He was carrying on a platter the

¹ Princes, princesses, counts, and countesses have the title of *Siyá-telstvo* (*siyám*—to shine, to be radiant); generally translated “Illustrious Highness” or “Serenity.”—TRANSLATOR.

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gnawed spinal bone of a herring, and, pushing to with his foot the door which led into the adjoining room, he said abruptly:—"What do you want?"

"Is Princess Zasyékin at home?"—I inquired.

"Vonifáty!"—screamed a quavering female voice on the other side of the door.

The servant silently turned his back on me, thereby displaying the badly-worn rear of his livery with its solitary, rusted, armoured button, and went away, leaving the platter on the floor.

"Hast thou been to the police-station?"—went on that same feminine voice. The servant muttered something in reply.—"Hey? Some one has come?"—was the next thing audible. "The young gentleman from next door?—Well, ask him in."

"Please come into the drawing-room, sir,"—said the servant, making his appearance again before me, and picking up the platter from the floor. I adjusted my attire and entered the "drawing-room."

I found myself in a tiny and not altogether clean room, with shabby furniture which seemed to have been hastily set in place. At the window, in an easy-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty, with uncovered hair¹ and plain-featured, clad in an old green gown, and with a variegated

¹The custom still prevails in Russia, to a great extent, for all elderly women to wear caps. In the peasant class it is considered as extremely indecorous to go "simple-haired," as the expression runs.
—TRANSLATOR.

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worsted kerchief round her neck. Her small black eyes fairly bored into me.

I went up to her and made my bow.

“I have the honour of speaking to Princess Zasyékin?”

“I am Princess Zasyékin: and you are the son of Mr. B—?”

“Yes, madam. I have come to you with a message from my mother.”

“Pray be seated. Vonifáty! where are my keys? Hast thou seen them?”

I communicated to Madame Zasyékin my mother’s answer to her note. She listened to me, tapping the window-pane with her thick, red fingers, and when I had finished she riveted her eyes on me once more.

“Very good; I shall certainly go,”—said she at last.—“But how young you are still! How old are you, allow me to ask?”

“Sixteen,”—I replied with involuntary hesitation.

The Princess pulled out of her pocket some dirty, written documents, raised them up to her very nose and began to sort them over.

“’T is a good age,”—she suddenly articulated, turning and fidgeting in her chair.—“And please do not stand on ceremony. We are plain folks.”

“Too plain,”—I thought, with involuntary disgust taking in with a glance the whole of her homely figure.

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At that moment, the other door of the drawing-room was swiftly thrown wide open, and on the threshold appeared the young girl whom I had seen in the garden the evening before. She raised her hand and a smile flitted across her face.

“And here is my daughter,”—said the Princess, pointing at her with her elbow.—“Zínotchka, the son of our neighbour, Mr. B—. What is your name, permit me to inquire?”

“Vladímir,”—I replied, rising and lisping with agitation.

“And your patronymic?”

“Petróvitch.”

“Yes! I once had an acquaintance, a chief of police, whose name was Vladímir Petróvitch also. Vonifáty! don’t hunt for the keys; the keys are in my pocket.”

The young girl continued to gaze at me with the same smile as before, slightly puckering up her eyes and bending her head a little on one side.

“I have already seen M’sieu Voldemar,”—she began. (The silvery tone of her voice coursed through me like a sweet chill.) —“Will you permit me to call you so?”

“Pray do, madam,”—I lisped.

“Where was that?”—asked the Princess.

The young Princess did not answer her mother.

“Are you busy now?”—she said, without taking her eyes off me.

“Not in the least, madam.”

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“Then will you help me to wind some wool? Come hither, to me.”

She nodded her head at me and left the drawing-room. I followed her.

In the room which we entered the furniture was a little better and was arranged with great taste. —But at that moment I was almost unable to notice anything; I moved as though in a dream and felt a sort of intense sensation of well-being verging on stupidity throughout my frame.

The young Princess sat down, produced a knot of red wool, and pointing me to a chair opposite her, she carefully unbound the skein and placed it on my hands. She did all this in silence, with a sort of diverting deliberation, and with the same brilliant and crafty smile on her slightly parted lips. She began to wind the wool upon a card doubled together, and suddenly illumined me with such a clear, swift glance, that I involuntarily dropped my eyes. When her eyes, which were generally half closed, opened to their full extent her face underwent a complete change; it was as though light had inundated it.

“What did you think of me yesterday, M’sieu Voldemar?”—she asked, after a brief pause.—“You certainly must have condemned me?”

“I Princess I thought nothing how can I” I replied, in confusion.

“Listen,”—she returned.—“You do not know

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me yet; I want people always to speak the truth to me. You are sixteen, I heard, and I am twenty-one; you see that I am a great deal older than you, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me . . . and obey me,"—she added. —“ Look at me; why don't you look at me? ”

I became still more confused; but I raised my eyes to hers, nevertheless. She smiled, only not in her former manner, but with a different, an approving smile.—“ Look at me,”—she said, caressingly lowering her voice:—“ I don't like that. . . . Your face pleases me; I foresee that we shall be friends. And do you like me? ”—she added slyly.

“ Princess ” I was beginning. . . .

“ In the first place, call me Zinaída Alexándrovna; and in the second place,—what sort of a habit is it for children ”—(she corrected herself) —“ for young men—not to say straight out what they feel? You do like me, don't you? ”

Although it was very pleasant to me to have her talk so frankly to me, still I was somewhat nettled. I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a small boy, and, assuming as easy and serious a mien as I could, I said:—“ Of course I like you very much, Zinaída Alexándrovna; I have no desire to conceal the fact.”

She shook her head, pausing at intervals.—“ Have you a governor? ”—she suddenly inquired.

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“No, I have not had a governor this long time past.”

I lied: a month had not yet elapsed since I had parted with my Frenchman.

“Oh, yes, I see: you are quite grown up.”

She slapped me lightly on the fingers.—“Hold your hands straight!”—And she busied herself diligently with winding her ball.

I took advantage of the fact that she did not raise her eyes, and set to scrutinising her, first by stealth, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed to me even more charming than on the day before: everything about it was so delicate, intelligent and lovely. She was sitting with her back to the window, which was hung with a white shade; a ray of sunlight making its way through that shade inundated with a flood of light her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, and calm, tender bosom.—I gazed at her—and how near and dear she became to me! It seemed to me both that I had known her for a long time and that I had known nothing and had not lived before she came. . . . She wore a rather dark, already shabby gown, with an apron; I believe I would willingly have caressed every fold of that gown and of that apron. The tips of her shoes peeped out from under her gown; I would have bowed down to those little boots. . . . “And here I sit, in front of her,”—I thought.—“I have become acquainted with her what

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happiness, my God!" I came near bouncing out of my chair with rapture, but I merely dangled my feet to and fro a little, like a child who is enjoying dainties.

I felt as much at my ease as a fish does in water, and I would have liked never to leave that room again as long as I lived.

Her eyelids slowly rose, and again her brilliant eyes beamed caressingly before me, and again she laughed.

"How you stare at me!"—she said slowly, shaking her finger at me.

I flushed scarlet. . . . "She understands all, she sees all,"—flashed through my head. "And how could she fail to see and understand all?"

Suddenly there was a clattering in the next room, and a sword clanked.

"Zína!"—screamed the old Princess from the drawing-room.—"Byelovzóroff has brought thee a kitten."

"A kitten!"—cried Zinaída, and springing headlong from her chair, she flung the ball on my knees and ran out.

I also rose, and, laying the skein of wool on the window-sill, went into the drawing-room, and stopped short in amazement. In the centre of the room lay a kitten with outstretched paws; Zinaída was kneeling in front of it, and carefully raising its snout. By the side of the young Princess, taking up nearly the entire wall-space between the

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windows, was visible a fair-complexioned, curly-haired young man, a hussar, with a rosy face and protruding eyes.

“How ridiculous!”—Zinaída kept repeating:—“and its eyes are not grey, but green, and what big ears it has! Thank you, Viktór Egóritch! you are very kind.”

The hussar, in whom I recognised one of the young men whom I had seen on the preceding evening, smiled and bowed, clicking his spurs and clanking the links of his sword as he did so.

“You were pleased to say yesterday that you wished to possess a striped kitten with large ears so I have got it, madam. Your word is my law.”—And again he bowed.

The kitten mewed faintly, and began to sniff at the floor.

“He is hungry!”—cried Zinaída.—“Voni-fáty! Sónya! bring some milk.”

The chambermaid, in an old yellow gown and with a faded kerchief on her head, entered with a saucer of milk in her hand, and placed it in front of the kitten. The kitten quivered, blinked, and began to lap.

“What a rosy tongue it has,”—remarked Zinaída, bending her head down almost to the floor, and looking sideways at it, under its very nose.

The kitten drank its fill, and began to purr, affectedly contracting and relaxing its paws. Zi-

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naída rose to her feet, and turning to the maid, said indifferently:—"Take it away."

"Your hand—in return for the kitten,"—said the hussar, displaying his teeth, and bending over the whole of his huge body, tightly confined in a new uniform.

"Both hands,"—replied Zinaída, offering him her hands. While he was kissing them, she gazed at me over his shoulder.

I stood motionless on one spot, and did not know whether to laugh or to say something, or to hold my peace. Suddenly, through the open door of the anteroom, the figure of our footman, Feódor, caught my eye. He was making signs to me. I mechanically went out to him.

"What dost thou want?"—I asked.

"Your mamma has sent for you,"—he said in a whisper.—"She is angry because you do not return with an answer."

"Why, have I been here long?"

"More than an hour."

"More than an hour!"—I repeated involuntarily, and returning to the drawing-room, I began to bow and scrape my foot.

"Where are you going?"—the young Princess asked me, with a glance at the hussar.

"I must go home, madam. So I am to say,"—I added, addressing the old woman,—"that you will call upon us at two o'clock."

"Say that, my dear fellow."

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The old Princess hurriedly drew out her snuff-box, and took a pinch so noisily that I fairly jumped.—“Say that,”—she repeated, tearfully blinking and grunting.

I bowed once more, turned and left the room with the same sensation of awkwardness in my back which a very young man experiences when he knows that people are staring after him.

“Look here, M’sieu Voldemar, you must drop in to see us,”—called Zinaída, and again burst out laughing.

“What makes her laugh all the time?” I thought, as I wended my way homé accompanied by Feódor, who said nothing to me, but moved along disapprovingly behind me. My mother reproved me, and inquired, with surprise, “What could I have been doing so long at the Princess’s?” I made her no answer, and went off to my own room. I had suddenly grown very melancholy. . . . I tried not to weep. . . . I was jealous of the hussar.

V

THE Princess, according to her promise, called on my mother, and did not please her. I was not present at their meeting, but at table my mother narrated to my father that that Princess Zasyékin seemed to her a *femme très vulgaire*; that she had bored her immensely with her requests that she

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would intervene on her behalf with Prince Ser-gyéi; that she was always having such law-suits and affairs,—*de vilaines affaires d'argent*,—and that she must be a great rogue. But my mother added that she had invited her with her daughter to dine on the following day (on hearing the words “with her daughter,” I dropped my nose into my plate),—because, notwithstanding, she was a neighbour, and with a name. Thereupon my father informed my mother that he now recalled who the lady was: that in his youth he had known the late Prince Zasyékin, a capitally-educated but flighty and captious man; that in society he was called “*le Parisien*,” because of his long residence in Paris; that he had been very wealthy, but had gambled away all his property—and, no one knew why, though probably it had been for the sake of the money,—“although he might have made a better choice,”—added my father, with a cold smile,—he had married the daughter of some clerk in a chancellery, and after his marriage had gone into speculation, and ruined himself definitively.

“’Tis a wonder she did not try to borrow money,”—remarked my mother.

“She is very likely to do it,”—said my father, calmly.—“Does she speak French?”

“Very badly.”

“M-m-m. However, that makes no difference.

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I think thou saidst that thou hadst invited her daughter; some one assured me that she is a very charming and well-educated girl."

"Ah! Then she does not take after her mother."

"Nor after her father,"—returned my father.—"He was also well educated, but stupid."

My mother sighed, and became thoughtful. My father relapsed into silence. I felt very awkward during the course of that conversation.

After dinner I betook myself to the garden, but without my gun. I had pledged my word to myself that I would not go near the "Zasyékin garden"; but an irresistible force drew me thither, and not in vain. I had no sooner approached the fence than I caught sight of Zinaída. This time she was alone. She was holding a small book in her hands and strolling slowly along the path. She did not notice me. I came near letting her slip past; but suddenly caught myself up and coughed.

She turned round but did not pause, put aside with one hand the broad blue ribbon of her round straw hat, looked at me, smiled quietly, and again riveted her eyes on her book.

I pulled off my cap, and after fidgeting about a while on one spot, I went away with a heavy heart. "*Que suis-je pour elle?*"—I thought (God knows why) in French.

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Familiar footsteps resounded behind me; I glanced round and beheld my father advancing toward me with swift, rapid strides.

"Is that the young Princess?"—he asked me.

"Yes."

"Dost thou know her?"

"I saw her this morning at the Princess her mother's."

My father halted and, wheeling abruptly round on his heels, retraced his steps. As he came on a level with Zinaída he bowed courteously to her. She bowed to him in return, not without some surprise on her face, and lowered her book. I saw that she followed him with her eyes. My father always dressed very elegantly, originally and simply; but his figure had never seemed to me more graceful, never had his grey hat sat more handsomely on his curls, which were barely beginning to grow thin.

I was on the point of directing my course toward Zinaída, but she did not even look at me, but raised her book once more and walked away.

VI

I SPENT the whole of that evening and the following day in a sort of gloomy stupor. I remember that I made an effort to work, and took up Kaidánoff; but in vain did the large-printed lines

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and pages of the famous text-book flit before my eyes. Ten times in succession I read the words: "Julius Cæsar was distinguished for military daring," without understanding a word, and I flung aside my book. Before dinner I pomaded my hair again, and again donned my frock-coat and neckerchief.

"What's that for?"—inquired my mother.—"Thou art not a student yet, and God knows whether thou wilt pass thy examination. And thy round-jacket was made not very long ago. Thou must not discard it!"

"There are to be guests,"—I whispered, almost in despair.

"What nonsense! What sort of guests are they?"

I was compelled to submit. I exchanged my coat for my round-jacket, but did not remove my neckerchief. The Princess and her daughter made their appearance half an hour before dinner; the old woman had thrown a yellow shawl over her green gown, with which I was familiar, and had donned an old-fashioned mob-cap with ribbons of a fiery hue. She immediately began to talk about her notes of hand, to sigh and to bewail her poverty, and to "importune," but did not stand in the least upon ceremony; and she took snuff noisily and fidgeted and wriggled in her chair as before. It never seemed to enter her head that she was a Princess. On the other hand,

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Zinaída bore herself very stiffly, almost haughtily, like a real young Princess. Cold impassivity and dignity had made their appearance on her countenance, and I did not recognise her,—did not recognise her looks or her smile, although in this new aspect she seemed to me very beautiful. She wore a thin barège gown with pale-blue figures; her hair fell in long curls along her cheeks, in the English fashion: this coiffure suited the cold expression of her face.

My father sat beside her during dinner, and with the exquisite and imperturbable courtesy which was characteristic of him, showed attention to his neighbour. He glanced at her from time to time, and she glanced at him now and then, but in such a strange, almost hostile, manner. Their conversation proceeded in French;—I remember that I was surprised at the purity of Zinaída's accent. The old Princess, as before, did not restrain herself in the slightest degree during dinner, but ate a great deal and praised the food. My mother evidently found her wearisome, and answered her with a sort of sad indifference; my father contracted his brows in a slight frown from time to time. My mother did not like Zinaída either.

“She's a haughty young sprig,”—she said the next day.—“And when one comes to think of it, what is there for her to be proud of?—*avec sa mine de grisette!*”

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“Evidently, thou hast not seen any grisettes,”—my father remarked to her.

“Of course I have n’t, God be thanked! Only, how art thou capable of judging of them?”

Zinaída paid absolutely no attention whatever to me. Soon after dinner the old Princess began to take her leave.

“I shall rely upon your protection, Márya Nikoláevna and Piótr Vasilitch,”—she said, in a sing-song tone, to my father and mother.—“What is to be done! I have seen prosperous days, but they are gone. Here am I a Radiance,”—she added, with an unpleasant laugh,—“but what’s the good of an honour when you’ve nothing to eat?”—My father bowed respectfully to her and escorted her to the door of the anteroom. I was standing there in my round-jacket, and staring at the floor, as though condemned to death. Zinaída’s behaviour toward me had definitively annihilated me. What, then, was my amazement when, as she passed me, she whispered to me hastily, and with her former affectionate expression in her eyes:—“Come to us at eight o’clock, do you hear? without fail. . . .” I merely threw my hands apart in amazement;—but she was already retreating, having thrown a white scarf over her head.

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VII

PRECISELY at eight o'clock I entered the tiny wing inhabited by the Princess, clad in my coat, and with my hair brushed up into a crest on top of my head. The old servant glared surlily at me, and rose reluctantly from his bench. Merry voices resounded in the drawing-room. I opened the door and retreated a pace in astonishment. In the middle of the room, on a chair, stood the young Princess, holding a man's hat in front of her; around the chair thronged five men. They were trying to dip their hands into the hat, but she kept raising it on high and shaking it violently. On catching sight of me she exclaimed:—

“Stay, stay! Here's a new guest; he must be given a ticket,”—and springing lightly from the chair, she seized me by the lapel of my coat.—“Come along,”—said she;—“why do you stand there? Messieurs, allow me to make you acquainted: this is Monsieur Voldemar, the son of our neighbour. And this,”—she added, turning to me, and pointing to the visitors in turn,—“is Count Malévsky, Doctor Lúshin, the poet Maidánoff, retired Captain Nirmátzky, and Byelov-zóroff the hussar, whom you have already seen. I beg that you will love and favour each other.”

I was so confused that I did not even bow to any one; in Doctor Lúshin I recognised that same

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swarthy gentleman who had so ruthlessly put me to shame in the garden; the others were strangers to me.

“Count!”—pursued Zinaída,—“write a ticket for M’sieu Voldemar.”

“That is unjust,”—returned the Count, with a slight accent,—a very handsome and foppishly-attired man, with a dark complexion, expressive brown eyes, a thin, white little nose, and a slender moustache over his tiny mouth.—“He has not been playing at forfeits with us.”

“’T is unjust,”—repeated Byelovzóroff and the gentleman who had been alluded to as the retired Captain,—a man of forty, horribly pock-marked, curly-haired as a negro, round-shouldered, bow-legged, and dressed in a military coat without epaulets, worn open on the breast.

“Write a ticket, I tell you,”—repeated the Princess.—“What sort of a rebellion is this? M’sieu Voldemar is with us for the first time, and to-day no law applies to him. No grumbling—write; I will have it so.”

The Count shrugged his shoulders, but submissively bowing his head, he took a pen in his white, ring-decked hand, tore off a scrap of paper and began to write on it.

“Permit me at least to explain to M’sieu Voldemar what it is all about,”—began Lúshin, in a bantering tone;—“otherwise he will be utterly at a loss. You see, young man, we are play-

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ing at forfeits; the Princess must pay a fine, and the one who draws out the lucky ticket must kiss her hand. Do you understand what I have told you?"

I merely glanced at him and continued to stand as though in a fog, while the Princess again sprang upon the chair and again began to shake the hat. All reached up to her—I among the rest.

"Maidánoff,"—said the Princess to the tall young man with a gaunt face, tiny mole-like eyes and extremely long, black hair,—“you, as a poet, ought to be magnanimous and surrender your ticket to M'sieu Voldemar, so that he may have two chances instead of one.”

But Maidánoff shook his head in refusal and tossed his hair. I put in my hand into the hat after all the rest, drew out and unfolded a ticket. . . . O Lord! what were my sensations when I beheld on it, “Kiss!”

“Kiss!”—I cried involuntarily.

“Bravo! He has won,”—chimed in the Princess.—“How delighted I am!”—She descended from the chair, and gazed into my eyes so clearly and sweetly that my heart fairly laughed with joy.—“And are you glad?”—she asked me.

“I?” . . . I stammered.

“Sell me your ticket,”—suddenly blurted out Byelovzóroff, right in my ear.—“I'll give you one hundred rubles for it.”

I replied to the hussar by such a wrathful look

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that Zinaída clapped her hands, and Lúshin cried:—“That ’s a gallant fellow!”

“But,”—he went on,—“in my capacity of master of ceremonies, I am bound to see that all the regulations are carried out. M’sieu Volde-mar, get down on one knee. That is our rule.”

Zinaída stood before me with her head bent a little to one side, as though the better to scrutinise me, and offered me her hand with dignity. Things grew dim before my eyes; I tried to get down on one knee, plumped down on both knees, and applied my lips to Zinaída’s fingers in so awkward a manner that I scratched the tip of my nose slightly on her nails.

“Good!”—shouted Lúshin, and helped me to rise.

The game of forfeits continued. Zinaída placed me beside her. What penalties they did invent! Among other things, she had to impersonate a “statue”—and she selected as a pedestal the monstrously homely Nirmátzky, ordering him to lie flat on the floor, and to tuck his face into his breast. The laughter did not cease for a single moment. All this noise and uproar, this unceremonious, almost tumultuous merriment, these unprecedented relations with strangers, fairly flew to my head; for I was a boy who had been reared soberly, and in solitude, and had grown up in a stately home of gentry. I became simply intoxicated, as though with wine. I began to shout

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with laughter and chatter more loudly than the rest, so that even the old Princess, who was sitting in the adjoining room with some sort of pettifogger from the Íversky Gate¹ who had been summoned for a conference, came out to take a look at me. But I felt so happy that, as the saying is, I didn't care a farthing for anybody's ridicule, or anybody's oblique glances.

Zinaída continued to display a preference for me and never let me leave her side. In one forfeit I was made to sit by her, covered up with one and the same silk kerchief: I was bound to tell her *my secret*. I remember how our two heads found themselves suddenly in choking, semi-transparent, fragrant gloom; how near and softly her eyes sparkled in that gloom, and how hotly her parted lips breathed; and her teeth were visible, and the tips of her hair tickled and burned me. I maintained silence. She smiled mysteriously and slyly, and at last whispered to me: "Well, what is it?" But I merely flushed and laughed, and turned away, and could hardly draw my breath. We got tired of forfeits, and began to play "string." Good heavens! what rapture I felt when, forgetting myself with gaping, I received from her a strong, sharp rap on my fingers; and how afterward I tried to pretend that I was

¹ The famous gate from the "White town" into the "China town," in Moscow, where there is a renowned holy picture of the Iberian Virgin, in a chapel. Evidently the lawyers' quarter was in this vicinity. — TRANSLATOR.

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yawning with inattention, but she mocked at me and did not touch my hands, which were awaiting the blow!

But what a lot of other pranks we played that same evening! We played on the piano, and sang, and danced, and represented a gipsy camp. We dressed Nirmátzky up like a bear, and fed him with water and salt. Count Malévsky showed us several card tricks, and ended by stacking the cards and dealing himself all the trumps at whist; upon which Lúshin "had the honour of congratulating him." Maidánoff declaimed to us fragments from his poem, "The Murderer" (this occurred in the very thick of romanticism), which he intended to publish in a black binding, with the title in letters of the colour of blood. We stole his hat from the knees of the pettifogger from the Íversky Gate, and made him dance the kazák dance by way of redeeming it. We dressed old Vonifáty up in a mob-cap, and the young Princess put on a man's hat. . . . It is impossible to recount all we did. Byelovzóroff alone remained most of the time in a corner, angry and frowning. . . . Sometimes his eyes became suffused with blood, he grew scarlet all over and seemed to be on the very point of swooping down upon all of us and scattering us on all sides, like chips; but the Princess glanced at him, menaced him with her finger, and again he retired into his corner.

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We were completely exhausted at last. The old Princess was equal to anything, as she put it, —no shouts disconcerted her,—but she felt tired and wished to rest. At midnight supper was served, consisting of a bit of old, dry cheese and a few cold patties filled with minced ham, which seemed to us more savoury than any pasty; there was only one bottle of wine, and that was rather queer:—dark, with a swollen neck, and the wine in it left an after-taste of pinkish dye; however, no one drank it. Weary and happy to exhaustion, I emerged from the wing; a thunder-storm seemed to be brewing; the black storm-clouds grew larger and crept across the sky, visibly altering their smoky outlines. A light breeze was uneasily quivering in the dark trees, and somewhere beyond the horizon the thunder was growling angrily and dully, as though to itself.

I made my way through the back door to my room. My nurse-valet was sleeping on the floor and I was obliged to step over him; he woke up, saw me, and reported that my mother was angry with me, and had wanted to send after me again, but that my father had restrained her. I never went to bed without having bidden my mother good night and begged her blessing. There was no help for it! I told my valet that I would undress myself and go to bed unaided,—and extinguished the candle. But I did not undress and I did not go to bed.

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I seated myself on a chair and sat there for a long time, as though enchanted. That which I felt was so new and so sweet I sat there, hardly looking around me and without moving, breathing slowly, and only laughing silently now, as I recalled, now inwardly turning cold at the thought that I was in love, that here it was, that love. Zinaída's face floated softly before me in the darkness—floated, but did not float away; her lips still smiled as mysteriously as ever, her eyes gazed somewhat askance at me, interrogatively, thoughtfully and tenderly as at the moment when I had parted from her. At last I rose on tiptoe, stepped to my bed and cautiously, without undressing, laid my head on the pillow, as though endeavouring by the sharp movement to frighten off that wherewith I was filled to overflowing. . . .

I lay down, but did not even close an eye. I speedily perceived that certain faint reflections kept constantly falling into my room. I raised myself and looked out of the window. Its frame was distinctly defined from the mysteriously and confusedly whitened panes. “ ’T is the thunder-storm,”—I thought,—and so, in fact, there was a thunder-storm; but it had passed very far away, so that even the claps of thunder were not audible; only in the sky long, indistinct, branching flashes of lightning, as it were, were uninterruptedly flashing up. They were not

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flashing up so much as they were quivering and twitching, like the wing of a dying bird. I rose, went to the window, and stood there until morning. . . . The lightning-flashes never ceased for a moment; it was what is called a pitch-black night. I gazed at the dumb, sandy plain, at the dark mass of the Neskútchny Park, at the yellowish façades of the distant buildings, which also seemed to be trembling at every faint flash. . . . I gazed, and could not tear myself away; those dumb lightning-flashes, those restrained gleams, seemed to be responding to the dumb and secret outbursts which were flaring up within me also. Morning began to break; the dawn started forth in scarlet patches. With the approach of the sun the lightning-flashes grew paler and paler; they quivered more and more infrequently, and vanished at last, drowned in the sobering and unequivocal light of the breaking day.

And my lightning-flashes vanished within me also. I felt great fatigue and tranquillity . . . but Zinaída's image continued to hover triumphantly over my soul. Only it, that image, seemed calm; like a flying swan from the marshy sedges, it separated itself from the other ignoble figures which surrounded it, and as I fell asleep, I bowed down before it for the last time in farewell and confiding adoration. . . .

Oh, gentle emotions, soft sounds, kindness and

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calming of the deeply-moved soul, melting joy of the first feelings of love,—where are ye, where are ye?

VIII

ON the following morning, when I went downstairs to tea, my mother scolded me,—although less than I had anticipated,—and made me narrate how I had spent the preceding evening. I answered her in few words, omitting many particulars and endeavouring to impart to my narrative the most innocent of aspects.

“Nevertheless, they are not people *comme il faut*,”—remarked my mother;—“and I do not wish thee to run after them, instead of preparing thyself for the examination, and occupying thyself.”

As I knew that my mother’s anxiety was confined to these few words, I did not consider it necessary to make her any reply; but after tea my father linked his arm in mine, and betaking himself to the garden with me, made me tell him everything I had done and seen at the Zasyékins’.

My father possessed a strange influence over me, and our relations were strange. He paid hardly any attention to my education, but he never wounded me; he respected my liberty—he was even, if I may so express it, courteous to me only, he did not allow me to get close to him.

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I loved him, I admired him; he seemed to me a model man; and great heavens! how passionately attached to him I should have been, had I not constantly felt his hand warding me off! On the other hand, when he wished, he understood how to evoke in me, instantaneously, with one word, one movement, unbounded confidence in him. My soul opened, I chatted with him as with an intelligent friend, as with an indulgent preceptor . . . then, with equal suddenness, he abandoned me, and again his hand repulsed me, caressingly and softly, but repulsed nevertheless.

Sometimes a fit of mirth came over him, and then he was ready to frolic and play with me like a boy (he was fond of every sort of energetic bodily exercise); once—only once—did he caress me with so much tenderness that I came near bursting into tears. . . . But his mirth and tenderness also vanished without leaving a trace, and what had taken place between us gave me no hopes for the future; it was just as though I had seen it all in a dream. I used to stand and scrutinise his clever, handsome, brilliant face . . . and my heart would begin to quiver, and my whole being would yearn toward him, . . . and he would seem to feel what was going on within me, and would pat me on the cheek in passing—and either go away, or begin to occupy himself with something, or suddenly freeze all over,—as he alone knew how to freeze,—and I would immedi-

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ately shrivel up and grow frigid also. His rare fits of affection for me were never called forth by my speechless but intelligible entreaties; they always came upon him without warning. When meditating, in after years, upon my father's character, I came to the conclusion that he did not care for me or for family life; he loved something different, and enjoyed that other thing to the full. "Seize what thou canst thyself, and do not give thyself into any one's power; the whole art of life consists in belonging to one's self,"—he said to me once. On another occasion I, in my capacity of a young democrat, launched out in his presence into arguments about liberty (he was what I called "kind" that day; at such times one could say whatever one liked to him).—"Liberty,"—he repeated,—“but dost thou know what can give a man liberty?”

“What?”

“Will, his own will, and the power which it gives is better than liberty. Learn to will, and thou wilt be free, and wilt command.”

My father wished, first of all and most of all, to enjoy life—and he did enjoy life. . . . Perhaps he had a presentiment that he was not fated long to take advantage of the “art” of living: he died at the age of forty-two.

I described to my father in detail my visit to the Zasyékins. He listened to me half-attentively, half-abstractedly, as he sat on the bench

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and drew figures on the sand with the tip of his riding-whip. Now and then he laughed, glanced at me in a brilliant, amused sort of way, and spurred me on by brief questions and exclamations. At first I could not bring myself even to utter Zinaída's name, but I could not hold out, and began to laud her. My father still continued to laugh. Then he became thoughtful, dropped his eyes and rose to his feet.

I recalled the fact that, as he came out of the house, he had given orders that his horse should be saddled. He was a capital rider, and knew much better how to tame the wildest horses than did Mr. Rarey.

"Shall I ride with thee, papa?"—I asked him.

"No,"—he replied, and his face assumed its habitual indifferently-caressing expression.—
"Go alone, if thou wishest; but tell the coachman that I shall not go."

He turned his back on me and walked swiftly away. I followed him with my eyes, until he disappeared beyond the gate. I saw his hat moving along the fence; he went into the Zasyékins' house.

He remained with them no more than an hour, but immediately thereafter went off to town and did not return home until evening.

After dinner I went to the Zasyékins' myself. I found no one in the drawing-room but the old Princess. When she saw me, she scratched her

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head under her cap with the end of her knitting-needle, and suddenly asked me: would I copy a petition for her?

“With pleasure,”—I replied, and sat down on the edge of a chair.

“Only look out, and see that you make the letters as large as possible,”—said the Princess, handing me a sheet of paper scrawled over in a slovenly manner:—“and could n’t you do it to-day, my dear fellow?”

“I will copy it this very day, madam.”

The door of the adjoining room opened a mere crack and Zinaída’s face showed itself in the aperture,—pale, thoughtful, with hair thrown carelessly back. She stared at me with her large, cold eyes, and softly shut the door.

“Zína,—hey there, Zína!”—said the old woman. Zinaída did not answer. I carried away the old woman’s petition, and sat over it the whole evening.

IX

MY “passion” began with that day. I remember that I then felt something of that which a man must feel when he enters the service: I had already ceased to be a young lad; I was in love. I have said that my passion dated from that day; I might have added that my sufferings also dated from that day. I languished when absent from Zinaída; my mind would not work, everything

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fell from my hands; I thought intently of her for days together. . . . I languished . . . but in her presence I was no more at ease. I was jealous, I recognised my insignificance, I stupidly sulked and stupidly fawned; and, nevertheless, an irresistible force drew me to her, and every time I stepped across the threshold of her room, it was with an involuntary thrill of happiness. Zinaída immediately divined that I had fallen in love with her, and I never thought of concealing the fact; she mocked at my passion, played tricks on me, petted and tormented me. It is sweet to be the sole source, the autocratic and irresponsible cause of the greatest joys and the profoundest woe to another person, and I was like soft wax in Zinaída's hands. However, I was not the only one who was in love with her; all the men who were in the habit of visiting her house were crazy over her, and she kept them all in a leash at her feet. It amused her to arouse in them now hopes, now fears, to twist them about at her caprice (she called it, "knocking people against one another"),—and they never thought of resisting, and willingly submitted to her. In all her vivacious and beautiful being there was a certain peculiarly bewitching mixture of guilefulness and heedlessness, of artificiality and simplicity, of tranquillity and playfulness; over everything she did or said, over her every movement, hovered a light, delicate charm, and an original, sparkling

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force made itself felt in everything. And her face was incessantly changing and sparkling also; it expressed almost simultaneously derision, pensiveness, and passion. The most varied emotions, light, fleeting as the shadows of the clouds on a sunny, windy day, kept flitting over her eyes and lips.

Every one of her adorers was necessary to her. Byelovzóroff, whom she sometimes called "my wild beast," and sometimes simply "my own," would gladly have flung himself into the fire for her; without trusting to his mental capacities and other merits, he kept proposing that he should marry her, and hinting that the others were merely talking idly. Maidánoff responded to the poetical chords of her soul: a rather cold man, as nearly all writers are, he assured her with intense force—and perhaps himself also—that he adored her. He sang her praises in interminable verses and read them to her with an unnatural and a genuine sort of enthusiasm. And she was interested in him and jeered lightly at him; she did not believe in him greatly, and after listening to his effusions she made him read Púshkin, in order, as she said, to purify the air. Lúshin, the sneering doctor, who was cynical in speech, knew her best of all and loved her best of all, although he abused her to her face and behind her back. She respected him, but would not let him go, and sometimes, with a peculiar, malicious pleasure, made

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him feel that he was in her hands. "I am a coquette, I am heartless, I have the nature of an actress," she said to him one day in my presence; "and 't is well! So give me your hand and I will stick a pin into it, and you will feel ashamed before this young man, and it will hurt you; but nevertheless, Mr. Upright Man, you will be so good as to laugh." Lúshin flushed crimson, turned away and bit his lips, but ended by putting out his hand. She pricked it, and he actually did break out laughing . . . and she laughed also, thrusting the pin in pretty deeply and gazing into his eyes while he vainly endeavoured to glance aside. . . .

I understood least of all the relations existing between Zinaída and Count Malévsky. That he was handsome, adroit, and clever even I felt, but the presence in him of some false, dubious element, was palpable even to me, a lad of sixteen, and I was amazed that Zinaída did not notice it. But perhaps she did detect that false element and it did not repel her. An irregular education, strange acquaintances, the constant presence of her mother, the poverty and disorder in the house—all this, beginning with the very freedom which the young girl enjoyed, together with the consciousness of her own superiority to the people who surrounded her, had developed in her a certain half-scornful carelessness and lack of exactness. No matter what happened—whether Voni-

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fáty came to report that there was no sugar, or some wretched bit of gossip came to light, or the visitors got into a quarrel among themselves, she merely shook her curls, and said: "Nonsense!"—and grieved very little over it.

On the contrary, all my blood would begin to seethe when Malévsky would approach her, swaying his body cunningly like a fox, lean elegantly over the back of her chair and begin to whisper in her ear with a conceited and challenging smile, while she would fold her arms on her breast, gaze attentively at him and smile also, shaking her head the while.

"What possesses you to receive Malévsky?"—I asked her one day.

"Why, he has such handsome eyes,"—she replied.—"But that is no business of yours."

"You are not to think that I am in love with him,"—she said to me on another occasion.—"No; I cannot love people upon whom I am forced to look down. I must have some one who can subdue me. . . . And I shall not hit upon such an one, for God is merciful! I shall not spare any one who falls into my paws—no, no!"

"Do you mean to say that you will never fall in love?"

"And how about you? Don't I love you?"—she said, tapping me on the nose with the tip of her glove.

Yes, Zinaída made great fun of me. For the

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space of three weeks I saw her every day; and what was there that she did not do to me! She came to us rarely, but I did not regret that; in our house she was converted into a young lady, a Princess,—and I avoided her. I was afraid of betraying myself to my mother; she was not at all well disposed toward Zinaída, and kept a disagreeable watch on us. I was not so much afraid of my father; he did not appear to notice me, and talked little with her, but that little in a peculiarly clever and significant manner. I ceased to work, to read; I even ceased to stroll about the environs and to ride on horseback. Like a beetle tied by the leg, I hovered incessantly around the beloved wing; I believe I would have liked to remain there forever but that was impossible. My mother grumbled at me, and sometimes Zinaída herself drove me out. On such occasions I shut myself up in my own room, or walked off to the very end of the garden, climbed upon the sound remnant of a tall stone hothouse, and dangling my legs over the wall, I sat there for hours and stared,—stared without seeing anything. White butterflies lazily flitted among the nettles beside me; an audacious sparrow perched not far off on the half-demolished red bricks and twittered in an irritating manner, incessantly twisting his whole body about and spreading out his tail; the still distrustful crows now and then emitted a caw, as they sat high, high above me on the naked crest

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of a birch-tree; the sun and the wind played softly through its sparse branches; the chiming of the bells, calm and melancholy, at the Don Monastery was wafted to me now and then,—and I sat on, gazing and listening, and became filled with a certain nameless sensation which embraced everything: sadness and joy, and a presentiment of the future, and the desire and the fear of life. But I understood nothing at the time of all that which was fermenting within me, or I would have called it all by one name, the name of Zinaída.

But Zinaída continued to play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. Now she coquetted with me, and I grew agitated and melted with emotion; now she repulsed me, and I dared not approach her, dared not look at her.

I remember that she was very cold toward me for several days in succession and I thoroughly quailed, and when I timidly ran to the wing to see them, I tried to keep near the old Princess, despite the fact that she was scolding and screaming a great deal just at that time: her affairs connected with her notes of hand were going badly, and she had also had two scenes with the police-captain of the precinct.

One day I was walking through the garden, past the familiar fence, when I caught sight of Zinaída. Propped up on both arms, she was sitting motionless on the grass. I tried to withdraw cautiously, but she suddenly raised her head and

made an imperious sign to me. I became petrified on the spot; I did not understand her the first time. She repeated her sign. I immediately sprang over the fence and ran joyfully to her; but she stopped me with a look and pointed to the path a couple of paces from her. In my confusion, not knowing what to do, I knelt down on the edge of the path. She was so pale, such bitter grief, such profound weariness were revealed in her every feature, that my heart contracted within me, and I involuntarily murmured: "What is the matter with you?"

Zinaída put out her hand, plucked a blade of grass, bit it, and tossed it away as far as she could.

"Do you love me very much?"—she inquired suddenly.—"Yes?"

I made no answer,—and what answer was there for me to make?

"Yes,"—she repeated, gazing at me as before.—"It is so. They are the same eyes,"—she added, becoming pensive, and covering her face with her hands.—"Everything has become repulsive to me,"—she whispered;—"I would like to go to the end of the world; I cannot endure this, I cannot reconcile myself. . . . And what is in store for me? Akh, I am heavy at heart my God, how heavy at heart!"

"Why?"—I timidly inquired.

Zinaída did not answer me and merely shrugged her shoulders. I continued to kneel and

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to gaze at her with profound melancholy. Every word of hers fairly cut me to the heart. At that moment, I think I would willingly have given my life to keep her from grieving. I gazed at her, and nevertheless, not understanding why she was heavy at heart, I vividly pictured to myself how, in a fit of uncontrollable sorrow, she had suddenly gone into the garden, and had fallen on the earth, as though she had been mowed down. All around was bright and green; the breeze was rustling in the foliage of the trees, now and then rocking a branch of raspberry over Zinaída's head. Doves were cooing somewhere and the bees were humming as they flew low over the scanty grass. Overhead the sky shone blue,—but I was so sad. . . .

“Recite some poetry to me,”—said Zinaída in a low voice, leaning on her elbow.—“I like to hear you recite verses. You make them go in a sing-song, but that does not matter, it is youthful. Recite to me: ‘On the Hills of Georgia.’—Only, sit down first.”

I sat down and recited, “On the Hills of Georgia.”

“‘That it is impossible not to love,’”—repeated Zinaída.—“That is why poetry is so nice; it says to us that which does not exist, and which is not only better than what does exist, but even more like the truth. . . .” “‘That it is impossible not to love’?—I would like to, but cannot!”—Again she

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fell silent for a space, then suddenly started and rose to her feet.—“Come along. Maidánoff is sitting with mamma; he brought his poem to me, but I left him. He also is embittered now how can it be helped? Some day you will find out but you must not be angry with me!”

Zináida hastily squeezed my hand, and ran on ahead. We returned to the wing. Maidánoff set to reading us his poem of “The Murderer,” which had only just been printed, but I did not listen. He shrieked out his four-footed iambs in a sing-song voice; the rhymes alternated and jingled like sleigh-bells, hollow and loud; but I kept staring all the while at Zináida, and striving to understand the meaning of her strange words.

“Or, perchance, a secret rival
Has unexpectedly subjugated thee?”

suddenly exclaimed Maidánoff through his nose—and my eyes and Zináida’s met. She dropped hers and blushed faintly. I saw that she was blushing, and turned cold with fright. I had been jealous before, but only at that moment did the thought that she had fallen in love flash through my mind. “My God! She is in love!”

X

My real tortures began from that moment. I cudgelled my brains, I pondered and pondered again, and watched Zináida importunately, but

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secretly, as far as possible. A change had taken place in her, that was evident. She took to going off alone to walk, and walked a long while. Sometimes she did not show herself to her visitors; she sat for hours together in her chamber. This had not been her habit hitherto. Suddenly I became—or it seemed to me that I became—extremely penetrating. “Is it he? Or is it not he?”—I asked myself, as in trepidation I mentally ran from one of her admirers to another. Count Malévsky (although I felt ashamed to admit it for Zinaída’s sake) privately seemed to me more dangerous than the others.

My powers of observation extended no further than the end of my own nose, and my dissimulation probably failed to deceive any one; at all events, Doctor Lúshin speedily saw through me. Moreover, he also had undergone a change of late; he had grown thin, he laughed as frequently as ever, but somehow it was in a duller, more spiteful, a briefer way;—an involuntary, nervous irritability had replaced his former light irony and feigned cynicism.

“Why are you forever tagging on here, young man?”—he said to me one day, when he was left alone with me in the Zasyékins’ drawing-room. (The young Princess had not yet returned from her stroll and the shrill voice of the old Princess was resounding in the upper story; she was wrangling with her maid.)—“You ought to be

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studying your lessons, working while you are young;—but instead of that, what are you doing?”

“You cannot tell whether I work at home,”—I retorted not without arrogance, but also not without confusion.

“Much work you do! That’s not what you have in your head. Well, I will not dispute . . . at your age, that is in the natural order of things. But your choice is far from a happy one. Can’t you see what sort of a house this is?”

“I do not understand you,”—I remarked.

“You don’t understand me? So much the worse for you. I regard it as my duty to warn you. Fellows like me, old bachelors, may sit here: what harm will it do us? We are a hardened lot. You can’t pierce our hide, but your skin is still tender; the air here is injurious for you,—believe me, you may become infected.”

“How so?”

“Because you may. Are you healthy now? Are you in a normal condition? Is what you are feeling useful to you, good for you?”

“But what am I feeling?”—said I;—and in my secret soul I admitted that the doctor was right.

“Eh, young man, young man,”—pursued the doctor, with an expression as though something extremely insulting to me were contained in those two words;—“there’s no use in your dissimulat-

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ing, for what you have in your soul you still show in your face, thank God! But what 's the use of arguing? I would not come hither myself, if” (the doctor set his teeth) “if I were not such an eccentric fellow. Only this is what amazes me—how you, with your intelligence, can fail to see what is going on around you.”

“But what is going on?”—I interposed, pricking up my ears.

The doctor looked at me with a sort of sneering compassion.

“A nice person I am,”—said he, as though speaking to himself.—“What possessed me to say that to him. In a word,”—he added, raising his voice,—“I repeat to you: the atmosphere here is not good for you. You find it pleasant here, and no wonder! And the scent of a hot-house is pleasant also—but one cannot live in it! Hey! hearken to me,—set to work again on Kaidánoff.”

The old Princess entered and began to complain to the doctor of toothache. Then Zinaída made her appearance.

“Here,”—added the old Princess,—“scold her, doctor, do. She drinks iced water all day long; is that healthy for her, with her weak chest?”

“Why do you do that?”—inquired Lúshin.

“But what result can it have?”

“What result? You may take cold and die.”

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“Really? Is it possible? Well, all right—that just suits me!”

“You don’t say so!”—growled the doctor. The old Princess went away.

“I do say so,”—retorted Zinaída.—“Is living such a cheerful thing? Look about you. . . Well—is it nice? Or do you think that I do not understand it, do not feel it? It affords me pleasure to drink iced water, and you can seriously assure me that such a life is worth too much for me to imperil it for a moment’s pleasure—I do not speak of happiness.”

“Well, yes,”—remarked Lúshin:—“caprice and independence. . . . Those two words sum you up completely; your whole nature lies in those two words.”

Zinaída burst into a nervous laugh.

“You’re too late by one mail, my dear doctor. You observe badly; you are falling behind.—Put on your spectacles.—I am in no mood for caprices now; how jolly to play pranks on you or on myself!—and as for independence. . . . M’sieu Voldemar,”—added Zinaída, suddenly stamping her foot,—“don’t wear a melancholy face. I cannot endure to have people commiserating me.”—She hastily withdrew.

“This atmosphere is injurious, injurious to you, young man,”—said Lúshin to me once more.

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XI

ON the evening of that same day the customary visitors assembled at the Zasyékins'; I was among the number.

The conversation turned on Maidánoff's poem; Zinaída candidly praised it.—“ But do you know what?”—she said:—“ If I were a poet, I would select other subjects. Perhaps this is all nonsense, but strange thoughts sometimes come into my head, especially when I am wakeful toward morning, when the sky is beginning to turn pink and grey.—I would, for example You will not laugh at me? ”

“ No! No! ”—we all exclaimed with one voice.

“ I would depict,”—she went on, crossing her arms on her breast, and turning her eyes aside,—“ a whole company of young girls, by night, in a big boat, on a tranquil river. The moon is shining, and they are all in white and wear garlands of white flowers, and they are singing, you know, something in the nature of a hymn.”

“ I understand, I understand, go on,”—said Maidánoff significantly and dreamily.

“ Suddenly there is a noise—laughter, torches, tambourines on the shore. . . . It is a throng of bacchantes running with songs and outcries. It is your business to draw the picture, Mr. Poet

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only I would like to have the torches red and very smoky, and that the eyes of the bacchantes should gleam beneath their wreaths, and that the wreaths should be dark. Don't forget also tiger-skins and cups—and gold, a great deal of gold.”

“But where is the gold to be?” inquired Maidánoff, tossing back his lank hair and inflating his nostrils.

“Where? On the shoulders, the hands, the feet, everywhere. They say that in ancient times women wore golden rings on their ankles.—The bacchantes call the young girls in the boat to come to them. The girls have ceased to chant their hymn,—they cannot go on with it,—but they do not stir; the river drifts them to the shore. And now suddenly one of them rises quietly. . . . This must be well described: how she rises quietly in the moonlight, and how startled her companions are. . . . She has stepped over the edge of the boat, the bacchantes have surrounded her, they have dashed off into the night, into the gloom. . . . Present at this point smoke in clouds; and everything has become thoroughly confused. Nothing is to be heard but their whimpering, and her wreath has been left lying on the shore.”

Zinaída ceased speaking. “Oh, she is in love!”—I thought again.

“Is that all?”—asked Maidánoff.

“That is all,”—she replied.

“That cannot be made the subject of an entire

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poem,"—he remarked pompously,—“but I will utilise your idea for some lyrical verses.”

“In the romantic vein?”—asked Malévsky.

“Of course, in the romantic vein—in Byron’s style.”

“But in my opinion, Hugo is better than Byron,”—remarked the young Count, carelessly:—“he is more interesting.”

“Hugo is a writer of the first class,”—rejoined Maidánoff, “and my friend Tonkoshéeff, in his Spanish romance, ‘El Trovador’ . . .”

“Ah, that ’s the book with the question-marks turned upside down?”—interrupted Zinaída.

“Yes. That is the accepted custom among the Spaniards. I was about to say that Tonkoshéeff. . . .”

“Come now! You will begin to wrangle again about classicism and romanticism,”—Zinaída interrupted him again.—“Let us rather play . . .”

“At forfeits?”—put in Lúshin.

“No, forfeits is tiresome; but at comparisons.” (This game had been invented by Zinaída herself; some object was named, and each person tried to compare it with something or other, and the one who matched the thing with the best comparison received a prize.) She went to the window. The sun had just set; long, crimson clouds hung high aloft in the sky.

“What are those clouds like?”—inquired Zinaída and, without waiting for our answers. she

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said:—" I think that they resemble those crimson sails which were on Cleopatra's golden ship, when she went to meet Antony. You were telling me about that not long ago, do you remember, Maidánoff? "

All of us, like Polonius in " Hamlet," decided that the clouds reminded us precisely of those sails, and that none of us could find a better comparison.

" And how old was Antony at that time? "—asked Zinaída.

" He was assuredly still a young man,"—remarked Malévsky.

" Yes, he was young,"—assented Maidánoff confidently.

" Excuse me,"—exclaimed Lúshin,—" he was over forty years of age."

" Over forty years of age,"—repeated Zinaída, darting a swift glance at him. . . .

I soon went home.—" She is in love," my lips whispered involuntarily. . . . " But with whom? "

XII

THE days passed by. Zinaída grew more and more strange, more and more incomprehensible. One day I entered her house and found her sitting on a straw-bottomed chair, with her head pressed against the sharp edge of a table. She straight-

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ened up . . . her face was again all bathed in tears.

“Ah! It’s you!”—she said, with a harsh grimace.—“Come hither.”

I went up to her: she laid her hand on my head and, suddenly seizing me by the hair, began to pull it.

“It hurts” . . . I said at last.

“Ah! It hurts! And does n’t it hurt me? Does n’t it hurt me?”—she repeated.

“Ai!”—she suddenly cried, perceiving that she had pulled out a small tuft of my hair.—“What have I done? Poor M’sieu Voldemar!” She carefully straightened out the hairs she had plucked out, wound them round her finger, and twisted them into a ring.

“I will put your hair in my locket and wear it,”—she said, and tears glistened in her eyes.—“Perhaps that will comfort you a little . . . but now, good-bye.”

I returned home and found an unpleasant state of things there. A scene was in progress between my father and my mother; she was upbraiding him for something or other, while he, according to his wont, was maintaining a cold, polite silence—and speedily went away. I could not hear what my mother was talking about, neither did I care to know: I remember only, that, at the conclusion of the scene, she ordered me to be called to her boudoir, and expressed herself with great dis-

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satisfaction about my frequent visits at the house of the old Princess, who was, according to her assertions, *une femme capable de tout*. I kissed her hand (I always did that when I wanted to put an end to the conversation), and went off to my own room. Zinaída's tears had completely discomfited me; I positively did not know what to think, and was ready to cry myself: I was still a child, in spite of my sixteen years. I thought no more of Malévsky, although Byelovzóroff became more and more menacing every day, and glared at the shifty Count like a wolf at a sheep; but I was not thinking of anything or of anybody. I lost myself in conjectures and kept seeking isolated spots. I took a special fancy to the ruins of the hothouse. I could clamber up on the high wall, seat myself, and sit there such an unhappy, lonely, and sad youth that I felt sorry for myself—and how delightful those mournful sensations were, how I gloated over them! . . .

One day, I was sitting thus on the wall, gazing off into the distance and listening to the chiming of the bells . . . when suddenly something ran over me—not a breeze exactly, not a shiver, but something resembling a breath, the consciousness of some one's proximity. . . . I dropped my eyes. Below me, in a light grey gown, with a pink parasol on her shoulder, Zinaída was walking hastily along the road. She saw me, halted, and, pushing

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up the brim of her straw hat, raised her velvety eyes to mine.

“What are you doing there, on such a height?”—she asked me, with a strange sort of smile.—“There now,”—she went on,—“you are always declaring that you love me—jump down to me here on the road if you really do love me.”

Before the words were well out of Zinaída’s mouth I had flown down, exactly as though some one had given me a push from behind. The wall was about two fathoms high. I landed on the ground with my feet, but the shock was so violent that I could not retain my balance; I fell, and lost consciousness for a moment. When I came to myself I felt, without opening my eyes, that Zinaída was by my side.—“My dear boy,”—she was saying, as she bent over me—and tender anxiety was audible in her voice—“how couldst thou do that, how couldst thou obey? I love thee rise.”

Her breast was heaving beside me, her hands were touching my head, and suddenly—what were my sensations then!—her soft, fresh lips began to cover my whole face with kisses they touched my lips. . . . But at this point Zinaída probably divined from the expression of my face that I had already recovered consciousness, although I still did not open my eyes—and swiftly rising to her feet, she said:—“Come, get up, you

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rogue, you foolish fellow! Why do you lie there in the dust?"—I got up.

"Give me my parasol,"—said Zinaída.—"I have thrown it somewhere; and don't look at me like that what nonsense is this? You are hurt? You have burned yourself with the nettles, I suppose. Don't look at me like that, I tell you. . . . Why, he understands nothing, he doesn't answer me,"—she added, as though speaking to herself. . . . "Go home, M'sieu Voldemar, brush yourself off, and don't dare to follow me—if you do I shall be very angry, and I shall never again"

She did not finish her speech and walked briskly away, while I sat down by the roadside . . . my legs would not support me. The nettles had stung my hands, my back ached, and my head was reeling; but the sensation of beatitude which I then experienced has never since been repeated in my life. It hung like a sweet pain in all my limbs and broke out at last in rapturous leaps and exclamations. As a matter of fact, I was still a child.

XIII

I WAS so happy and proud all that day; I preserved so vividly on my visage the feeling of Zinaída's kisses; I recalled her every word with such ecstasy; I so cherished my unexpected happiness that I even became frightened; I did not even

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wish to see her who was the cause of those new sensations. It seemed to me that I could ask nothing more of Fate, that now I must "take and draw a deep breath for the last time, and die." On the other hand, when I set off for the wing next day, I felt a great agitation, which I vainly endeavoured to conceal beneath the discreet facial ease suitable for a man who wishes to let it be understood that he knows how to keep a secret. Zinaída received me very simply, without any emotion, merely shaking her finger at me and asking: Had I any bruises? All my discreet ease of manner and mysteriousness instantly disappeared, and along with them my agitation. Of course I had not expected anything in particular, but Zinaída's composure acted on me like a dash of cold water. I understood that I was a child in her eyes—and my heart waxed very heavy! Zinaída paced to and fro in the room, smiling swiftly every time she glanced at me; but her thoughts were far away, I saw that clearly. . . . "Shall I allude to what happened yesterday myself,"—I thought;—"shall I ask her where she was going in such haste, in order to find out, definitively?" . . . but I merely waved my hand in despair and sat down in a corner.

Byelovzóroff entered; I was delighted to see him.

"I have not found you a gentle saddle-horse,"—he began in a surly tone;—"Freitag vouches

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to me for one—but I am not convinced. I am afraid.”

“Of what are you afraid, allow me to inquire?” asked Zinaída.

“Of what? Why, you don’t know how to ride. God forbid that any accident should happen! And what has put that freak into your head?”

“Come, that’s my affair, M’sieu my wild beast. In that case, I will ask Piótr Vasílievitch” (My father was called Piótr Vasílievitch I was amazed that she should mention his name so lightly and freely, exactly as though she were convinced of his readiness to serve her.)

“You don’t say so!”—retorted Byelovzóroff.—“Is it with him that you wish to ride?”

“With him or some one else,—that makes no difference to you. Only not with you.”

“Not with me,”—said Byelovzóroff.—“As you like. What does it matter? I will get you the horse.”

“But see to it that it is not a cow-like beast. I warn you in advance that I mean to gallop.”

“Gallop, if you wish. . . . But is it with Malévsky that you are going to ride?”

“And why should n’t I ride with him, warrior? Come, quiet down. I’ll take you too. You know that for me Malévsky is now—fie!”—She shook her head.

“You say that just to console me,”—growled Byelovzóroff.

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Zinaída narrowed her eyes.—“Does that console you? . . oh . . oh . . . oh . . warrior!”—she said at last, as though unable to find any other word.—“And would you like to ride with us, M’sieu Vol-demar?”

“I ’m not fond of riding . . . in a large party,” . . . I muttered, without raising my eyes.

“You prefer a *tête-à-tête*? . . . Well, every one to his taste,”—she said, with a sigh.—“But go, Byelovzóroff, make an effort. I want the horse for to-morrow.”

“Yes; but where am I to get the money?”—interposed the old Princess.

Zinaída frowned.

“I am not asking any from you; Byelovzóroff will trust me.”

“He will, he will,” . . . grumbled the old Princess—and suddenly screamed at the top of her voice:—“Dunyáshka!”

“*Maman*, I made you a present of a bell,”—remarked the young Princess.

“Dunyáshka!”—repeated the old woman.

Byelovzóroff bowed himself out; I went out with him. Zinaída did not detain me.

XIV

I ROSE early the next morning, cut myself a staff, and went off beyond the city barrier. “I ’ll have a walk and banish my grief,”—I said to myself.

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It was a beautiful day, brilliant but not too hot; a cheerful, fresh breeze was blowing over the earth and rustling and playing moderately, keeping in constant motion and agitating nothing. For a long time I roamed about on the hills and in the forests. I did not feel happy; I had left home with the intention of surrendering myself to melancholy;—but youth, the fine weather, the fresh air, the diversion of brisk pedestrian exercise, the delight of lying in solitude on the thick grass, produced their effect; the memory of those unforgettable words, of those kisses, again thrust themselves into my soul. It was pleasant to me to think that Zinaída could not, nevertheless, fail to do justice to my decision, to my heroism. . . . “Others are better for her than I,”—I thought:—“so be it! On the other hand, the others only say what they will do, but I have done it! And what else am I capable of doing for her?”—My imagination began to ferment. I began to picture to myself how I would save her from the hands of enemies; how, all bathed in blood, I would wrest her out of prison; how I would die at her feet. I recalled a picture which hung in our drawing-room of Malek-Adel carrying off Matilda—and thereupon became engrossed in the appearance of a big, speckled woodpecker which was busily ascending the slender trunk of a birch-tree, and uneasily peering out from behind it, now on the right, now on the left,

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like a musician from behind the neck of his bass-viol.

Then I began to sing: "Not the white snows,"—and ran off into the romance which was well known at that period, "I will await thee when the playful breeze"; then I began to recite aloud Ermák's invocation to the stars in K'homyakóff's tragedy; I tried to compose something in a sentimental vein; I even thought out the line where-with the whole poem was to conclude: "Oh, Zinaída! Zinaída!"—But it came to nothing. Meanwhile, dinner-time was approaching. I descended into the valley; a narrow, sandy path wound through it and led toward the town. I strolled along that path. . . . The dull tramping of horses' hoofs resounded behind me. I glanced round, involuntarily came to a stand-still and pulled off my cap. I beheld my father and Zinaída. They were riding side by side. My father was saying something to her, bending his whole body toward her, and resting his hand on the neck of her horse; he was smiling. Zinaída was listening to him in silence, with her eyes severely downcast and lips compressed. At first I saw only them; it was not until several moments later that Byelovzóroff made his appearance from round a turn in the valley, dressed in hussar uniform with pelisse, and mounted on a foam-flecked black horse. The good steed was tossing his head, snorting and cur-

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vetting; the rider was both reining him in and spurring him on. I stepped aside. My father gathered up his reins and moved away from Zinaída; she slowly raised her eyes to his—and both set off at a gallop. . . . Byelovzóroff dashed headlong after them with clanking sword. “He is as red as a crab,”—I thought,—“and she. . . . Why is she so pale? She has been riding the whole morning—and yet she is pale?”

I redoubled my pace and managed to reach home just before dinner. My father was already sitting, re-dressed, well-washed and fresh, beside my mother’s arm-chair, and reading aloud to her in his even, sonorous voice, the *feuilleton* of the *Journal des Débats*; but my mother was listening to him inattentively and, on catching sight of me, inquired where I had been all day, adding, that she did not like to have me prowling about God only knew where and God only knew with whom. “But I have been walking alone,”—I was on the point of replying; but I glanced at my father and for some reason or other held my peace.

XV

DURING the course of the next five or six days I hardly saw Zinaída; she gave it out that she was ill, which did not, however, prevent the habitual visitors from presenting themselves at the wing—“to take their turn in attendance,”—as they

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expressed it;—all except Maidánoff, who immediately became dispirited as soon as he had no opportunity to go into raptures. Byelovzóroff sat morosely in a corner, all tightly buttoned up and red in the face; on Count Malévsky's delicate visage hovered constantly a sort of evil smile; he really had fallen into disfavour with Zinaída and listened with particular pains to the old Princess, and drove with her to the Governor-General's in a hired carriage. But this trip proved unsuccessful and even resulted in an unpleasantness for Malévsky: he was reminded of some row with certain Putéisk officers, and was compelled, in self-justification, to say that he was inexperienced at the time. Lúshin came twice a day, but did not remain long. I was somewhat afraid of him after our last explanation and, at the same time, I felt a sincere attachment for him. One day he went for a stroll with me in the Neskútchny Park, was very good-natured and amiable, imparted to me the names and properties of various plants and flowers, and suddenly exclaimed—without rhyme or reason, as the saying is—as he smote himself on the brow: “And I, like a fool, thought she was a coquette! Evidently, it is sweet to sacrifice one's self—for some people!”

“What do you mean to say by that?”—I asked.

“I don't mean to say anything to you,”—returned Lúshin, abruptly.

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Zinaída avoided me; my appearance—I could not but perceive the fact—produced an unpleasant impression on her. She involuntarily turned away from me . . . involuntarily; that was what was bitter, that was what broke my heart! But there was no help for it and I tried to keep out of her sight and only stand guard over her from a distance, in which I was not always successful. As before, something incomprehensible was taking place with her; her face had become different—she was altogether a different person. I was particularly struck by the change which had taken place in her on a certain warm, tranquil evening. I was sitting on a low bench under a wide-spreading elder-bush; I loved that little nook; the window of Zinaída's chamber was visible thence. I was sitting there; over my head, in the darkened foliage, a tiny bird was rummaging fussily about; a great cat with outstretched back had stolen into the garden, and the first beetles were booming heavily in the air, which was still transparent although no longer light. I sat there and stared at the window, and waited to see whether some one would not open it: and, in fact, it did open, and Zinaída made her appearance in it. She wore a white gown, and she herself—her face, her shoulders and her hands—was pale to whiteness. She remained for a long time motionless, and for a long time stared, without moving, straight in front of her from beneath her con-

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tracted brows. I did not recognise that look in her. Then she clasped her hands very, very tightly, raised them to her lips, to her forehead—and suddenly, unlocking her fingers, pushed her hair away from her ears, shook it back and, throwing her head downward from above with a certain decisiveness, she shut the window with a bang.

Two days later she met me in the park. I tried to step aside, but she stopped me.

“Give me your hand,”—she said to me, with her former affection.—“It is a long time since you and I have had a chat.”

I looked at her; her eyes were beaming softly and her face was smiling, as though athwart a mist.

“Are you still ailing?”—I asked her.

“No, everything has passed off now,”—she replied, breaking off a small, red rose.—“I am a little tired, but that will pass off also.”

“And will you be once more the same as you used to be?”—I queried.

Zinaída raised the rose to her face, and it seemed to me as though the reflection of the brilliant petals fell upon her cheeks.—“Have I changed?”—she asked me.

“Yes, you have changed,”—I replied in a low voice.

“I was cold toward you,—I know that,”—began Zinaída;—“but you must not pay any heed

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to that. . . . I could not do otherwise. . . . Come, what 's the use of talking about that? ”

“ You do not want me to love you—that 's what! ” I exclaimed gloomily, with involuntary impetuosity.

“ Yes, love me, but not as before.”

“ How then? ”

“ Let us be friends,—that is how! ”—Zinaída allowed me to smell of the rose.—“ Listen; I am much older than you, you know—I might be your aunt, really; well, if not your aunt, then your elder sister. While you”

“ I am a child to you,”—I interrupted her.

“ Well, yes, you are a child, but a dear, good, clever child, of whom I am very fond. Do you know what? I will appoint you to the post of my page from this day forth; and you are not to forget that pages must not be separated from their mistress. Here is a token of your new dignity for you,”—she added, sticking the rose into the button-hole of my round-jacket; “ a token of our favour toward you.”

“ I have received many favours from you in the past,”—I murmured.

“ Ah! ”—said Zinaída, and darting a sidelong glance at me.—“ What a memory you have! Well? And I am ready now also”

And bending toward me, she imprinted on my brow a pure, calm kiss.

I only stared at her—but she turned away and,

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saying,—“Follow me, my page,”—walked to the wing. I followed her—and was in a constant state of bewilderment.—“Is it possible,”—I thought,—“that this gentle, sensible young girl is that same Zinaída whom I used to know?”—And her very walk seemed to me more quiet, her whole figure more majestic, more graceful. . . .

And, my God! with what fresh violence did love flame up within me!

XVI

AFTER dinner the visitors were assembled again in the wing, and the young Princess came out to them. The whole company was present, in full force, as on that first evening, never to be forgotten by me: even Nirmátsky had dragged himself thither. Maidánoff had arrived earlier than all the rest; he had brought some new verses. The game of forfeits began again, but this time without the strange sallies, without pranks and uproar; the gipsy element had vanished. Zinaída gave a new mood to our gathering. I sat beside her, as a page should. Among other things, she proposed that the one whose forfeit was drawn should narrate his dream; but this was not a success. The dreams turned out to be either uninteresting (Byelovzóroff had dreamed that he had fed his horse on carp, and that it had a wooden head), or unnatural, fictitious. Maidánoff re-

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galed us with a complete novel; there were sepulchres and angels with harps, and burning lights and sounds wafted from afar. Zinaída did not allow him to finish. “If it is a question of invention,”—said she,—“then let each one relate something which is positively made up.”—Byelovzóroff had to speak first.

The young hussar became confused.—“I cannot invent anything!”—he exclaimed.

“What nonsense!”—interposed Zinaída.—“Come, imagine, for instance, that you are married, and tell us how you would pass the time with your wife. Would you lock her up?”

“I would.”

“And would you sit with her yourself?”

“I certainly would sit with her myself.”

“Very good. Well, and what if that bored her, and she betrayed you?”

“I would kill her.”

“Just so. Well, now supposing that I were your wife, what would you do then?”

Byelovzóroff made no answer for a while.—“I would kill myself”

Zinaída burst out laughing.—“I see that there’s not much to be got out of you.”

The second forfeit fell to Zinaída’s share. She raised her eyes to the ceiling and meditated.—“See here,”—she began at last,—“this is what I have devised. . . . Imagine to yourselves a magnificent palace, a summer night, and a marvellous

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ball. This ball is given by the young Queen. Everywhere there are gold, marble, silk, lights, diamonds, flowers, the smoke of incense—all the whims of luxury.”

“Do you love luxury?”—interrupted Lúshin.

“Luxury is beautiful,”—she returned;—“I love everything that is beautiful.”

“More than what is fine?”—he asked.

“That is difficult; somehow I don’t understand. Don’t bother me. So then, there is a magnificent ball. There are many guests, they are all young, very handsome, brave; all are desperately in love with the Queen.”

“Are there no women among the guests?”—inquired Malévsky.

“No—or stay—yes, there are.”

“Also very handsome?”

“Charming. But the men are all in love with the Queen. She is tall and slender; she wears a small gold diadem on her black hair.”

I looked at Zinaída—and at that moment she seemed so far above us, her white forehead and her impassive eyebrows exhaled so much clear intelligence and such sovereignty, that I said to myself: “Thou thyself art that Queen!”

“All throng around her,”—pursued Zinaída;—“all lavish the most flattering speeches on her.”

“And is she fond of flattery?”—asked Lúshin.

“How intolerable! He is continually interrupting. . . Who does not like flattery?”

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“One more final question,”—remarked Malévsky:—“Has the Queen a husband?”

“I have not thought about that. No, why should she have a husband?”

“Of course,”—assented Malévsky;—“why should she have a husband?”

“Silence!”—exclaimed, in English, Maidánoff, who spoke French badly.

“*Merci*,”—said Zinaída to him.—“So then, the Queen listens to those speeches, listens to the music, but does not look at a single one of the guests. Six windows are open from top to bottom, from ceiling to floor, and behind them are the dark sky with great stars and the dark garden with huge trees. The Queen gazes into the garden. There, near the trees is a fountain: it gleams white athwart the gloom—long, as long as a spectre. The Queen hears the quiet plashing of its waters in the midst of the conversation and the music. She gazes and thinks: ‘All of you gentlemen are noble, clever, wealthy; you are all ready to die at my feet, I rule over you; . . . but yonder, by the side of the fountain, by the side of that plashing water, there is standing and waiting for me the man whom I love, who rules over me. He wears no rich garments, nor precious jewels; no one knows him; but he is waiting for me, and is convinced that I shall come—and I shall come, and there is no power in existence which can stop me when I wish to go to him and

remain with him and lose myself with him yonder, in the gloom of the park, beneath the rustling of the trees, beneath the plashing of the fountain’ ”

Zinaída ceased speaking.

“ Is that an invention? ”—asked Malévsky slyly.

Zinaída did not even glance at him.

“ But what should we do, gentlemen,”—suddenly spoke up Lúshin,—“ if we were among the guests and knew about that lucky man by the fountain? ”

“ Stay, stay,”—interposed Zinaída:—“ I myself will tell you what each one of you would do. You, Byelovzóroff, would challenge him to a duel; you, Maidánoff, would write an epigram on him. . . . But no—you do not know how to write epigrams; you would compose a long iambic poem on him, after the style of Barbier, and would insert your production in the *Telegraph*. You, Nirmátzky, would borrow from him no, you would lend him money on interest; you, doctor” She paused. . . . “ I really do not know about you,—what you would do.”

“ In my capacity of Court-physician,” replied Lúshin, “ I would advise the Queen not to give balls when she did not feel in the mood for guests”

“ Perhaps you would be in the right. And you, Count? ”

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“And I?”—repeated Malévsky, with an evil smile.

“And you would offer him some poisoned sugar-plums.”

Malévsky’s face writhed a little and assumed for a moment a Jewish expression; but he immediately burst into a guffaw.

“As for you, M’sieu Voldemar” went on Zinaída,—“but enough of this; let us play at some other game.”

“M’sieu Voldemar, in his capacity of page to the Queen, would hold up her train when she ran off into the park,”—remarked Malévsky viciously.

I flared up, but Zinaída swiftly laid her hand on my shoulder and rising, said in a slightly tremulous voice:—“I have never given Your Radiance the right to be insolent, and therefore I beg that you will withdraw.”—She pointed him to the door.

“Have mercy, Princess,”—mumbled Malévsky, turning pale all over.

“The Princess is right,”—exclaimed Byelov-zóroff, rising to his feet also.

“By God! I never in the least expected this,”—went on Malévsky:—“I think there was nothing in my words which . . . I had no intention of offending you. . . . Forgive me.”

Zinaída surveyed him with a cold glance, and smiled coldly.—“Remain, if you like,”—she said,

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with a careless wave of her hand.—“M’sieu Voldemar and I have taken offence without cause. You find it merry to jest. . . . I wish you well.”

“Forgive me,”—repeated Malévsky once more; and I, recalling Zinaída’s movement, thought again that a real queen could not have ordered an insolent man out of the room with more majesty.

The game of forfeits did not continue long after this little scene; all felt somewhat awkward, not so much in consequence of the scene itself as from another, not entirely defined, but oppressive sensation. No one alluded to it, but each one was conscious of its existence within himself and in his neighbour. Maidánoff recited to us all his poems—and Malévsky lauded them with exaggerated warmth.

“How hard he is trying to appear amiable now,”—Lúshin whispered to me.

We soon dispersed. Zinaída had suddenly grown pensive; the old Princess sent word that she had a headache; Nirmátzky began to complain of his rheumatism. . . .

For a long time I could not get to sleep; Zinaída’s narrative had impressed me.—“Is it possible that it contains a hint?”—I asked myself:—“and at whom was she hinting? And if there really is some one to hint about what must I decide to do? No, no, it cannot be,”—I whis-

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pered, turning over from one burning cheek to the other. . . . But I called to mind the expression of Zinaída's face during her narration. . . . I called to mind the exclamation which had broken from Lúshin in the Neskútny Park, the sudden changes in her treatment of me—and lost myself in conjectures. "Who is he?" Those three words seemed to stand in front of my eyes, outlined in the darkness; a low-lying, ominous cloud seemed to be hanging over me—and I felt its pressure—and waited every moment for it to burst. I had grown used to many things of late; I had seen many things at the Zasyékins'; their disorderliness, tallow candle-ends, broken knives and forks, gloomy Vonifáty, the shabby maids, the manners of the old Princess herself,—all that strange life no longer surprised me. . . . But to that which I now dimly felt in Zinaída I could not get used "An adventuress,"—my mother had one day said concerning her. An adventuress—she, my idol, my divinity! That appellation seared me; I tried to escape from it by burrowing into my pillow; I raged—and at the same time, to what would not I have agreed, what would not I have given, if only I might be that happy mortal by the fountain! . . .

My blood grew hot and seethed within me. "A garden a fountain," . . . I thought. . . . "I will go into the garden." I dressed myself quickly and slipped out of the house. The

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night was dark, the trees were barely whispering; a quiet chill was descending from the sky, an odour of fennel was wafted from the vegetable-garden. I made the round of all the alleys; the light sound of my footsteps both disconcerted me and gave me courage; I halted, waiting and listening to hear how my heart was beating quickly and violently. At last I approached the fence and leaned against a slender post. All at once—or was it only my imagination?—a woman's figure flitted past a few paces distant from me. . . . I strained my eyes intently on the darkness; I held my breath. What was this? Was it footsteps that I heard or was it the thumping of my heart again?—"Who is here?"—I stammered in barely audible tones. What was that again? A suppressed laugh? . . . or a rustling in the leaves? . . . or a sigh close to my very ear? I was terrified. . . . "Who is here?"—I repeated, in a still lower voice.

The breeze began to flutter for a moment; a fiery band flashed across the sky; a star shot down. —"Is it Zinaída?"—I tried to ask, but the sound died on my lips. And suddenly everything became profoundly silent all around, as often happens in the middle of the night. . . . Even the katydids ceased to shrill in the trees; only a window rattled somewhere. I stood and stood, then returned to my chamber, to my cold bed. I felt a strange agitation—exactly as though I had

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gone to a tryst, and had remained alone, and had passed by some one else's happiness.

XVII

THE next day I caught only a glimpse of Zinaída; she drove away somewhere with the old Princess in a hired carriage. On the other hand, I saw Lúshin—who, however, barely deigned to bestow a greeting on me—and Malévsky. The young Count grinned and entered into conversation with me in friendly wise. Among all the visitors to the wing he alone had managed to effect an entrance to our house, and my mother had taken a fancy to him. My father did not favour him and treated him politely to the point of insult.

“Ah, *monsieur le page*,”—began Malévsky, —“I am very glad to meet you. What is your beauteous queen doing?”

His fresh, handsome face was so repulsive to me at that moment, and he looked at me with such a scornfully-playful stare, that I made him no answer whatsoever.

“Are you still in a bad humour?”—he went on. —“There is no occasion for it. It was not I, you know, who called you a page; and pages are chiefly with queens. But permit me to observe to you that you are fulfilling your duties badly.”

“How so?”

“Pages ought to be inseparable from their sov-

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ereigns; pages ought to know everything that they do; they ought even to watch over them,”—he added, lowering his voice,—“day and night.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“What do I mean? I think I have expressed myself plainly. Day—and night. It does not matter so much about the day; by day it is light and there are people about; but by night—that’s exactly the time to expect a catastrophe. I advise you not to sleep o’ nights and to watch, watch with all your might. Remember—in a garden, by night, near the fountain—that’s where you must keep guard. You will thank me for this.”

Malévsky laughed and turned his back on me. He did not, in all probability, attribute any special importance to what he had said to me; he bore the reputation of being a capital hand at mystification, and was renowned for his cleverness in fooling people at the masquerades, in which that almost unconscious disposition to lie, where-with his whole being was permeated, greatly aided him. . . . He had merely wished to tease me; but every word of his trickled like poison through all my veins.—The blood flew to my head.

“Ah! so that’s it!”—I said to myself:—“good! So it was not for nothing that I felt drawn to the garden! That shall not be!” I exclaimed, smiting myself on the breast with my

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fist; although I really did not know what it was that I was determined not to permit.—“Whether Malévsky himself comes into the garden,”—I thought (perhaps he had blurted out a secret; he was insolent enough for that),—“or some one else,”—(the fence of our vegetable-garden was very low and it cost no effort to climb over it) — “at any rate, it will be all the worse for the person whom I catch! I would not advise any one to encounter me! I’ll show the whole world and her, the traitress,”—(I actually called her a traitress) — “that I know how to avenge myself!”

I returned to my own room, took out of my writing-table a recently purchased English knife, felt of the sharp blade, and, knitting my brows, thrust it into my pocket with a cold and concentrated decision, exactly as though it was nothing remarkable for me to do such deeds, and this was not the first occasion. My heart swelled angrily within me and grew stony; I did not unbend my brows until nightfall and did not relax my lips, and kept striding back and forth, clutching the knife which had grown warm in my pocket, and preparing myself in advance for something terrible. These new, unprecedented emotions so engrossed and even cheered me, that I thought very little about Zinaída herself. There kept constantly flitting through my head Aleko, the young gipsy:¹—“Where art thou going, hand-

¹ In Púshkin’s poem, “The Gipsies.”—TRANSLATOR.

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some youth?—Lie down” and then: “Thou ’rt all with blood bespattered! Oh, what is ’t that thou hast done? . . . Nothing!” With what a harsh smile I repeated that: that “Nothing!”

My father was not at home; but my mother, who for some time past had been in a state of almost constant, dull irritation, noticed my baleful aspect at supper, and said to me:—“What art thou sulking at, like a mouse at groats?”—I merely smiled patronisingly at her by way of reply and thought to myself: “If they only knew!”—The clock struck eleven; I went to my own room but did not undress; I was waiting for midnight; at last it struck.—“’T is time!”—I hissed between my teeth, and buttoning my coat to the throat and even turning up my sleeves I betook myself to the garden.

I had selected a place beforehand where I meant to stand on guard. At the end of the garden, at the spot where the fence, which separated our property from the Zasyékins’, abutted on the party-wall, grew a solitary spruce-tree. Standing beneath its low, thick branches, I could see well, as far as the nocturnal gloom permitted, all that went on around; there also meandered a path which always seemed to me mysterious; like a serpent it wound under the fence, which at that point bore traces of clambering feet, and led to an arbour of dense acacias. I reached the spruce-

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tree, leaned against its trunk and began my watch.

The night was as tranquil as the preceding one had been; but there were fewer storm-clouds in the sky, and the outlines of the bushes, even of the tall flowers, were more plainly discernible. The first moments of waiting were wearisome, almost terrible. I had made up my mind to everything; I was merely considering how I ought to act. Ought I to thunder out: "Who goes there? Halt! Confess—or die!"—or simply smite. . . Every sound, every noise and rustling seemed to me significant, unusual I made ready I bent forward. But half an hour, an hour, elapsed; my blood quieted down and turned cold; the consciousness that I was doing all this in vain, that I was even somewhat ridiculous, that Malévsky had been making fun of me, began to steal into my soul. I abandoned my ambush and made the round of the entire garden. As though expressly, not the slightest sound was to be heard anywhere; everything was at rest; even our dog was asleep, curled up in a ball at the gate. I climbed up on the ruin of the hothouse, beheld before me the distant plain, recalled my meeting with Zinaída, and became immersed in meditation.

I started I thought I heard the creak of an opening door, then the light crackling of a broken twig. In two bounds I had descended

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from the ruin—and stood petrified on the spot. Swift, light but cautious footsteps were plainly audible in the garden. They were coming toward me. “Here he is. . . . Here he is, at last!”—darted through my heart. I convulsively jerked the knife out of my pocket, convulsively opened it—red sparks whirled before my eyes, the hair stood up on my head with fright and wrath. . . . The steps were coming straight toward me—I bent over, and went to meet them. . . . A man made his appearance. . . . My God! It was my father!

I recognised him instantly, although he was all enveloped in a dark cloak,—and had pulled his hat down over his face. He went past me on tip-toe. He did not notice me although nothing concealed me; but I had so contracted myself and shrunk together that I think I must have been on a level with the ground. The jealous Othello, prepared to murder, had suddenly been converted into the school-boy. . . . I was so frightened by the unexpected apparition of my father that I did not even take note, at first, in what direction he was going and where he had disappeared. I merely straightened up at the moment and thought: “Why is my father walking in the garden by night?”—when everything around had relapsed into silence. In my alarm I had dropped my knife in the grass, but I did not even try to find it; I felt very much ashamed. I became so-

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bered on the instant. But as I wended my way home, I stepped up to my little bench under the elder-bush and cast a glance at the little window of Zinaída's chamber. The small, somewhat curved panes of the little window gleamed dully blue in the faint light which fell from the night sky. Suddenly their colour began to undergo a change. . . . Behind them—I saw it, saw it clearly,—a whitish shade was lowered, descended to the sill,—and there remained motionless.

“What is the meaning of that?”—I said aloud, almost involuntarily, when I again found myself in my own room.—“Was it a dream, an accident, or” The surmises which suddenly came into my head were so new and strange that I dared not even yield to them.

XVIII

I ROSE in the morning with a headache. My agitation of the night before had vanished. It had been replaced by an oppressive perplexity and a certain, hitherto unknown sadness,—exactly as though something had died in me.

“What makes you look like a rabbit which has had half of its brain removed?”—said Lúshin, who happened to meet me. At breakfast I kept casting covert glances now at my father, now at my mother; he was calm, as usual; she, as usual, was secretly irritated. I waited to see whether

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my father would address me in a friendly way, as he sometimes did. . . . But he did not even caress me with his cold, everyday affection.—“Shall I tell Zinaída all?”—I thought. . . . “For it makes no difference now—everything is over between us.” I went to her, but I not only did not tell her anything,—I did not even get a chance to talk to her as I would have liked. The old Princess’s son, a cadet aged twelve, had come from Petersburg to spend his vacation with her; Zinaída immediately confided her brother to me.—“Here, my dear Volódya,”—said she (she called me so for the first time), “is a comrade for you. His name is Volódya also. Pray, like him; he’s a wild little fellow still, but he has a good heart. Show him Neskútchny Park, walk with him, take him under your protection. You will do that, will you not? You, too, are such a good fellow!”—She laid both hands affectionately on my shoulder—and I was reduced to utter confusion. The arrival of that boy turned me into a boy. I stared in silence at the cadet, who riveted his eyes in corresponding silence on me. Zinaída burst out laughing and pushed us toward each other.—“Come, embrace, children!”—We embraced.—“I’ll take you into the garden if you wish,—shall I?”—I asked the cadet.

“Certainly, sir,”—he replied, in a hoarse, genuine cadet voice. Again Zinaída indulged in a burst of laughter. . . . I managed to notice

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that never before had she had such charming colour in her face. The cadet and I went off together. In our garden stood an old swing. I seated him on the thin little board and began to swing him. He sat motionless in his new little uniform of thick cloth with broad gold galloon, and clung tightly to the ropes.

"You had better unhook your collar,"—I said to him.

"Never mind, sir,¹ we are used to it, sir,"—he said, and cleared his throat.

He resembled his sister; his eyes were particularly suggestive of her. It was pleasant to me to be of service to him; and, at the same time, that aching pain kept quietly gnawing at my heart. "Now I really am a child," I thought; "but last night" I remembered where I had dropped my knife and found it. The cadet asked me to lend it to him, plucked a thick stalk of lovage, cut a whistle from it, and began to pipe. Othello piped also.

But in the evening, on the other hand, how he did weep, that same Othello, over Zinaída's hands when, having sought him out in a corner of the garden, she asked him what made him so melancholy. My tears streamed with such violence that she was frightened.—"What is the matter with you? What is the matter with you, Volódya?"

¹ The respectful "s," which is an abbreviation of "sir" or "madam."—TRANSLATOR.

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—she kept repeating, and seeing that I made her no reply, she took it into her head to kiss my wet cheek. But I turned away from her and whispered through my sobs:—“ I know everything: why have you trifled with me? . . . Why did you want my love? ”

“ I am to blame toward you, Volódya ” said Zinaída.—“ Akh, I am very much to blame ” she said, and clenched her hands.—“ How much evil, dark, sinful, there is in me! . . . But I am not trifling with you now, I love you—you do not suspect why and how. . . . But what is it you know? ”

What could I say to her? She stood before me and gazed at me—and I belonged to her wholly, from head to foot, as soon as she looked at me. . . . A quarter of an hour later I was running a race with the cadet and Zinaída; I was not weeping; I was laughing, although my swollen eyelids dropped tears from laughing; on my neck, in place of a tie, was bound a ribbon of Zinaída's, and I shouted with joy when I succeeded in seizing her round the waist. She did with me whatsoever she would.

XIX

I SHOULD be hard put to it, if I were made to narrate in detail all that went on within me in the course of the week which followed my unsuccessful

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ful nocturnal expedition. It was a strange, feverish time, a sort of chaos in which the most opposite emotions, thoughts, suspicions, hopes, joys, and sufferings revolved in a whirlwind; I was afraid to look into myself, if a sixteen-year-old can look into himself; I was afraid to account to myself for anything whatsoever; I simply made haste to live through the day until the evening; on the other hand, at night I slept . . . childish giddiness helped me. I did not want to know whether I was beloved, and would not admit to myself that I was not beloved; I shunned my father—but could not shun Zinaída. . . . I burned as with fire in her presence, . . . but what was the use of my knowing what sort of fire it was wherewith I burned and melted—seeing that it was sweet to me to burn and melt! I surrendered myself entirely to my impressions, and dealt artfully with myself, turned away from my memories and shut my eyes to that of which I had a presentiment in the future. . . . This anguish probably would not have continued long . . . a thunder-clap put an instantaneous end to everything and hurled me into a new course.

On returning home one day to dinner from a rather long walk, I learned with surprise that I was to dine alone; that my father had gone away, while my mother was ill, did not wish to dine and had shut herself up in her bedroom. From the footmen's faces I divined that something un-

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usual had taken place. . . . I dared not interrogate them, but I had a friend, the young butler Philípp, who was passionately fond of poetry and an artist on the guitar; I applied to him. From him I learned that a frightful scene had taken place between my father and mother (for in the maids' room everything was audible, to the last word; a great deal had been said in French, but the maid Másha had lived for five years with a dressmaker from Paris and understood it all); that my mother had accused my father of infidelity, of being intimate with the young lady our neighbour; that my father had first defended himself, then had flared up and in his turn had made some harsh remark "seemingly about her age," which had set my mother to crying; that my mother had also referred to a note of hand, which appeared to have been given to the old Princess, and expressed herself very vilely about her, and about the young lady as well; and that then my father had threatened her.—"And the whole trouble arose,"—pursued Philípp, "out of an anonymous letter; but who wrote it no one knows; otherwise there was no reason why this affair should have come out."

"But has there been anything?"—I enunciated with difficulty, while my hands and feet turned cold, and something began to quiver in the very depths of my breast.

Philípp winked significantly.—"There has.

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You can't conceal such doings, cautious as your papa has been in this case;—still, what possessed him, for example, to hire a carriage, or to . . . for you can't get along without people there also."

I dismissed Philípp, and flung myself down on my bed. I did not sob, I did not give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself when and how all this had taken place; I was not surprised that I had not guessed it sooner, long before—I did not even murmur against my father. . . . That which I had learned was beyond my strength; this sudden discovery had crushed me. . . . All was over. All my flowers had been plucked up at one blow and lay strewn around me, scattered and trampled under foot.

XX

ON the following day my mother announced that she was going to remove to town. My father went into her bedroom in the morning and sat there a long time alone with her. No one heard what he said to her, but my mother did not weep any more; she calmed down and asked for something to eat, but did not show herself and did not alter her intention. I remember that I wandered about all day long, but did not go into the garden and did not glance even once at the wing—and in the

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evening I was the witness of an amazing occurrence; my father took Count Malévsky by the arm and led him out of the hall into the anteroom and, in the presence of a lackey, said coldly to him: "Several days ago Your Radiance was shown the door in a certain house.. I shall not enter into explanations with you now, but I have the honour to inform you that if you come to my house again I shall fling you through the window. I don't like your handwriting." The Count bowed, set his teeth, shrank together, and disappeared.

Preparations began for removing to town, on the Arbát,¹ where our house was situated. Probably my father himself no longer cared to remain in the villa; but it was evident that he had succeeded in persuading my mother not to make a row. Everything was done quietly, without haste; my mother even sent her compliments to the old Princess and expressed her regret that, owing to ill-health, she would be unable to see her before her departure. I prowled about like a crazy person, and desired but one thing,—that everything might come to an end as speedily as possible. One thought never quitted my head: how could she, a young girl,—well, and a princess into the bargain,—bring herself to such a step, knowing that my father was not a free man while she had the possibility of marrying Bye-

¹ A square in Moscow.—TRANSLATOR.

lovzóroff at least, for example? What had she hoped for? How was it that she had not been afraid to ruin her whole future?—"Yes,"—I thought,—“that’s what love is,—that is passion,—that is devotion,” . . . and I recalled Lúshin’s words to me: “Self-sacrifice is sweet—for some people.” Once I happened to catch sight of a white spot in one of the windows of the wing. . . . “Can that be Zinaída’s face?”—I thought; . . . and it really was her face. I could not hold out. I could not part from her without bidding her a last farewell. I seized a convenient moment and betook myself to the wing.

In the drawing-room the old Princess received me with her customary, slovenly-careless greeting.

“What has made your folks uneasy so early, my dear fellow?”—she said, stuffing snuff up both her nostrils. I looked at her, and a weight was removed from my heart. The word “note of hand” uttered by Philípp tormented me. She suspected nothing so it seemed to me then, at least. Zinaída made her appearance from the adjoining room in a black gown, pale, with hair out of curl; she silently took me by the hand and led me away to her room.

“I heard your voice,”—she began,—“and came out at once. And did you find it so easy to desert us, naughty boy?”

“I have come to take leave of you, Princess,”

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—I replied,—“ probably forever. You may have heard we are going away.”

Zinaída gazed intently at me.

“ Yes, I have heard. Thank you for coming. I was beginning to think that I should not see you.—Think kindly of me. I have sometimes tormented you; but nevertheless I am not the sort of person you think I am.”

She turned away and leaned against the window-casing.

“ Really, I am not that sort of person. I know that you have a bad opinion of me.”

“ I? ”

“ Yes, you you.”

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“ I? ”—I repeated sorrowfully, and my heart began to quiver as of old, beneath the influence of the irresistible, inexpressible witchery.—“ I? Believe me, Zinaída Alexándrovna, whatever you may have done, however you may have tormented me, I shall love and adore you until the end of my life.”

She turned swiftly toward me and opening her arms widely, she clasped my head, and kissed me heartily and warmly. God knows whom that long, farewell kiss was seeking, but I eagerly tasted its sweetness. I knew that it would never more be repeated.—“ Farewell, farewell! ” I kept saying. . . .

She wrenched herself away and left the room. And I withdrew also. I am unable to describe

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the feeling with which I retired. I should not wish ever to have it repeated; but I should consider myself unhappy if I had never experienced it.

We removed to town. I did not speedily detach myself from the past, I did not speedily take up my work. My wound healed slowly; but I really had no evil feeling toward my father. On the contrary, he seemed to have gained in stature in my eyes . . . let the psychologists explain this contradiction as best they may. One day I was walking along the boulevard when, to my indescribable joy, I encountered Lúshin. I liked him for his straightforward, sincere character; and, moreover, he was dear to me in virtue of the memories which he awakened in me. I rushed at him.

“Aha!”—he said, with a scowl.—“Is it you, young man? Come, let me have a look at you. You are still all sallow, and yet there is not the olden trash in your eyes. You look like a man, not like a lap-dog. That’s good. Well, and how are you? Are you working?”

I heaved a sigh. I did not wish to lie, and I was ashamed to tell the truth.

“Well, never mind,”—went on Lúshin,—“don’t be afraid. The principal thing is to live in normal fashion and not to yield to impulses. Otherwise, where’s the good? No matter whither the wave bears one—’t is bad; let a man stand on

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a stone if need be, but on his own feet. Here I am croaking . . . but Byelovzóroff—have you heard about him?”

“What about him? No.”

“He has disappeared without leaving a trace; they say he has gone to the Caucasus. A lesson to you, young man. And the whole thing arises from not knowing how to say good-bye,—to break bonds in time. You, now, seem to have jumped out successfully. Look out, don't fall in again. Farewell.”

“I shall not fall in,”—I thought. . . . “I shall see her no more.” But I was fated to see Zinaída once more.

XXI

My father was in the habit of riding on horseback every day; he had a splendid red-roan English horse, with a long, slender neck and long legs, indefatigable and vicious. Its name was Electric. No one could ride it except my father. One day he came to me in a kindly frame of mind, which had not happened with him for a long time: he was preparing to ride, and had donned his spurs. I began to entreat him to take me with him.

“Let us, rather, play at leap-frog,”—replied my father,—“for thou wilt not be able to keep up with me on thy cob.”

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“Yes, I shall; I will put on spurs also.”

“Well, come along.”

We set out. I had a shaggy, black little horse, strong on its feet and fairly spirited; it had to gallop with all its might, it is true, when Electric was going at a full trot; but nevertheless I did not fall behind. I have never seen such a horse-man as my father. His seat was so fine and so carelessly-adroit that the horse under him seemed to be conscious of it and to take pride in it. We rode the whole length of all the boulevards, reached the Maidens' Field,¹ leaped over several enclosures (at first I was afraid to leap, but my father despised timid people, and I ceased to be afraid), crossed the Moscow river twice;—and I was beginning to think that we were on our way homeward, the more so as my father remarked that my horse was tired, when suddenly he turned away from me in the direction of the Crimean Ford, and galloped along the shore.—I dashed after him. When he came on a level with a lofty pile of old beams which lay heaped together, he sprang nimbly from Electric, ordered me to alight and, handing me the bridle of his horse, told me to wait for him on that spot, near the beams; then he turned into a narrow alley and dis-

¹ A great plain situated on the outskirts of the town. So called because (says tradition) it was here that annually were assembled the young girls who were sent, in addition to the money tribute, to the Khan, during the Tatár period, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—TRANSLATOR.

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appeared. I began to pace back and forth along the shore, leading the horses after me and scolding Electric, who as he walked kept incessantly twitching his head, shaking himself, snorting and neighing; when I stood still, he alternately pawed the earth with his hoof, and squealed and bit my cob on the neck; in a word, behaved like a spoiled darling, *pur sang*. My father did not return. A disagreeable humidity was wafted from the river; a fine rain set in and mottled the stupid, grey beams, around which I was hovering and of which I was so heartily tired, with tiny, dark spots. Anxiety took possession of me, but still my father did not come. A Finnish sentry, also all grey, with a huge, old-fashioned shako, in the form of a pot, on his head, and armed with a halberd (why should there be a sentry, I thought, on the shores of the Moscow river?), approached me, and turning his elderly, wrinkled face to me, he said:

“What are you doing here with those horses, my little gentleman? Hand them over to me; I’ll hold them.”

I did not answer him; he asked me for some tobacco. In order to rid myself of him (moreover, I was tortured by impatience), I advanced a few paces in the direction in which my father had retreated; then I walked through the alley to the very end, turned a corner, and came to a standstill. On the street, forty paces distant from

me, in front of the open window of a small wooden house, with his back to me, stood my father; he was leaning his breast on the window-sill, while in the house, half concealed by the curtain, sat a woman in a dark gown talking with my father: the woman was Zinaída.

I stood rooted to the spot in amazement. I must confess that I had in nowise expected this. My first impulse was to flee. "My father will glance round," I thought,— "and then I am lost." But a strange feeling—a feeling more powerful than curiosity, more powerful even than jealousy, more powerful than fear,—stopped me. I began to stare, I tried to hear. My father appeared to be insisting upon something. Zinaída would not consent. I seem to see her face now—sad, serious, beautiful, and with an indescribable imprint of adoration, grief, love, and a sort of despair. She uttered monosyllabic words, did not raise her eyes, and only smiled—submissively and obstinately. From that smile alone I recognised my former Zinaída. My father shrugged his shoulders, and set his hat straight on his head—which was always a sign of impatience with him. . . . Then the words became audible: "*Vous devez vous séparer de cette.*" Zinaída drew herself up and stretched out her hand. . . . Suddenly, before my very eyes, an incredible thing came to pass:—all at once, my father raised the riding-whip, with which he had been lashing the

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dust from his coat-tails,—and the sound of a sharp blow on that arm, which was bare to the elbow, rang out. I could hardly keep from shrieking, but Zinaída started, gazed in silence at my father, and slowly raising her arm to her lips, kissed the mark which glowed scarlet upon it.

My father hurled his riding-whip from him, and running hastily up the steps of the porch, burst into the house. . . . Zinaída turned round, and stretching out her arms, and throwing back her head, she also quitted the window.

My heart swooning with terror, and with a sort of alarmed perplexity, I darted backward; and dashing through the alley, and almost letting go of Electric, I returned to the bank of the river. . . I could understand nothing. I knew that my cold and self-contained father was sometimes seized by fits of wild fury; and yet I could not in the least comprehend what I had seen. . . . But I immediately felt that no matter how long I might live, it would be impossible for me ever to forget that movement, Zinaída's glance and smile; that her image, that new image which had suddenly been presented to me, had forever imprinted itself on my memory. I stared stupidly at the river and did not notice that my tears were flowing. "She is being beaten,"—I thought. . . . "She is being beaten beaten"

"Come, what ails thee?—Give me my horse!"—rang out my father's voice behind me.

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I mechanically gave him the bridle. He sprang upon Electric the half-frozen horse reared on his hind legs and leaped forward half a fathom but my father speedily got him under control; he dug his spurs into his flanks and beat him on the neck with his fist. . . . “Ekh, I have no whip,”—he muttered.

I remembered the recent swish through the air and the blow of that same whip, and shuddered.

“What hast thou done with it?”—I asked my father, after waiting a little.

My father did not answer me and galloped on. I dashed after him. I was determined to get a look at his face.

“Didst thou get bored in my absence?”—he said through his teeth.

“A little. But where didst thou drop thy whip?”—I asked him again.

My father shot a swift glance at me.—“I did not drop it,”—he said,—“I threw it away,”—He reflected for a space and dropped his head and then, for the first and probably for the last time, I saw how much tenderness and compunction his stern features were capable of expressing.

He set off again at a gallop, and this time I could not keep up with him; I reached home a quarter of an hour after him.

“That’s what love is,”—I said to myself again, as I sat at night before my writing-table,

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on which copy-books and text-books had already begun to make their appearance,—“that is what passion is! How is it possible not to revolt, how is it possible to endure a blow from any one whomsoever even from the hand that is most dear? But evidently it can be done if one is in love. . . . And I I imagined”

The last month had aged me greatly, and my love, with all its agitations and sufferings, seemed to me like something very petty and childish and wretched in comparison with that other unknown something at which I could hardly even guess, and which frightened me like a strange, beautiful but menacing face that one strives, in vain, to get a good look at in the semi-darkness. . . .

That night I had a strange and dreadful dream. I thought I was entering a low, dark room. My father was standing there, riding-whip in hand, and stamping his feet; Zinaída was crouching in one corner and had a red mark, not on her arm, but on her forehead and behind the two rose up Byelovzóroff, all bathed in blood, with his pale lips open, and wrathfully menacing my father.

Two months later I entered the university, and six months afterward my father died (of an apoplectic stroke) in Petersburg, whither he had just removed with my mother and myself. A few days before his death my father had received a letter from Moscow which had agitated him ex-

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tremely. . . . He went to beg something of my mother and, I was told, even wept,—he, my father! On the very morning of the day on which he had the stroke, he had begun a letter to me in the French language: “My son,”—he wrote to me,—“fear the love of women, fear that happiness, that poison” After his death my mother sent a very considerable sum of money to Moscow.

XXII

FOUR years passed. I had but just left the university, and did not yet quite know what to do with myself, at what door to knock; in the meanwhile, I was lounging about without occupation. One fine evening I encountered Maidánoff in the theatre. He had contrived to marry and enter the government service; but I found him unchanged. He went into unnecessary raptures, just as of old, and became low-spirited as suddenly as ever.

“You know,”—he said to me,—“by the way, that Madame Dólsky is here.”

“What Madame Dólsky?”

“Is it possible that you have forgotten? The former Princess Zasyékin, with whom we were all in love, you included. At the villa, near Nes-kútchny Park, you remember?”

“Did she marry Dólsky?”

“Yes.”

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“And is she here in the theatre?”

“No, in Petersburg; she arrived here a few days ago; she is preparing to go abroad.

“What sort of a man is her husband?”—I asked.

“A very fine young fellow and wealthy. He’s my comrade in the service, a Moscow man. You understand—after that scandal you must be well acquainted with all that” (Maidánoff smiled significantly), “it was not easy for her to find a husband; there were consequences but with her brains everything is possible. Go to her; she will be delighted to see you. She is handsomer than ever.”

Maidánoff gave me Zinaída’s address. She was stopping in the Hotel Demuth. Old memories began to stir in me. . . . I promised myself that I would call upon my former “passion” the next day. But certain affairs turned up: a week elapsed, and when, at last, I betook myself to the Hotel Demuth and inquired for Madame Dólsky I learned that she had died four days previously, almost suddenly, in childbirth.

Something seemed to deal me a blow in the heart. The thought that I might have seen her but had not, and that I should never see her,—that bitter thought seized upon me with all the force of irresistible reproach. “Dead!” I repeated, staring dully at the door-porter, then quietly made my way to the street and walked away, with-

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out knowing whither. The whole past surged up at one blow and stood before me. And now this was the way it had ended, this was the goal of that young, fiery, brilliant life? I thought that—I pictured to myself those dear features, those eyes, those curls in the narrow box, in the damp, underground gloom,—right there, not far from me, who was still alive, and, perchance, only a few paces from my father. . . . I thought all that, I strained my imagination, and yet—

From a mouth indifferent I heard the news of death,
And with indifference did I receive it—

resounded through my soul. O youth, youth! Thou carest for nothing: thou possessest, as it were, all the treasures of the universe; even sorrow comforts thee, even melancholy becomes thee; thou art self-confident and audacious; thou sayest: “I alone live—behold!”—But the days speed on and vanish without a trace and without reckoning, and everything vanishes in thee, like wax in the sun, like snow. . . . And perchance the whole secret of thy charm consists not in the power to do everything, but in the possibility of thinking that thou wilt do everything—consists precisely in the fact that thou scatterest to the winds thy powers which thou hast not understood how to employ in any other way,—in the fact that each one of us seriously regards himself as a prodigal, seriously assumes that he has a right to

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say: "Oh, what could I not have done, had I not wasted my time!"

And I myself . . . what did I hope for, what did I expect, what rich future did I foresee, when I barely accompanied with a single sigh, with a single mournful emotion, the spectre of my first love which had arisen for a brief moment?

And what has come to pass of all for which I hoped? Even now, when the shades of evening are beginning to close in upon my life, what is there that has remained for me fresher, more precious than the memory of that morning spring thunder-storm which sped so swiftly past?

But I calumniate myself without cause. Even then, at that frivolous, youthful epoch, I did not remain deaf to the sorrowful voice which responded within me to the triumphant sound which was wafted to me from beyond the grave. I remember that a few days after I learned of Zinaída's death I was present, by my own irresistible longing, at the death-bed of a poor old woman who lived in the same house with us. Covered with rags, with a sack under her head, she died heavily and with difficulty. Her whole life had been passed in a bitter struggle with daily want; she had seen no joy, she had not tasted the honey of happiness—it seemed as though she could not have failed to rejoice at death, at her release, her repose. But nevertheless, as long as her decrepit body held out, as long as her breast

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heaved under the icy hand which was laid upon it, until her last strength deserted her, the old woman kept crossing herself and whispering:—"O Lord, forgive my sins,"—and only with the last spark of consciousness did there vanish from her eyes the expression of fear and horror at her approaching end. And I remember that there, by the bedside of that poor old woman, I felt terrified for Zinaída, and felt like praying for her, for my father—and for myself.

A CORRESPONDENCE

(1855)

A CORRESPONDENCE

SEVERAL years ago I was in Dresden. I stopped in the hotel. As I was running about the town from early morning until late at night, I did not consider it necessary to make acquaintance with my neighbours; at last, accidentally, it came to my knowledge that there was a sick Russian in the house. I went to him, and found a man in the last stage of consumption. Dresden was beginning to pall upon me; I settled down with my new acquaintance. It is wearisome to sit with an invalid, but even boredom is agreeable sometimes; moreover, my invalid was not dejected, and liked to chat. We endeavoured, in every way, to kill time: we played "fool" together, we jeered at the doctor. My compatriot narrated to that very bald German divers fictions about his own condition, which the doctor always "had long foreseen"; he mimicked him when he was surprised at any unprecedented attack, flung his medicine out of the window, and so forth.

Nevertheless I repeatedly remarked to my friend that it would not be a bad idea to send for a good physician before it was too late, that his malady was not to be jested with, and so forth.

But Alexyéi (my acquaintance's name was Alexyéi Petróvitch S***) put me off every time with jests about all doctors in general, and his own in particular, and at last, one stormy autumn evening, to my importunate entreaties, he replied with such a dejected glance, he shook his head so sadly, and smiled so strangely, that I felt a certain surprise. That same night Alexyéi grew worse, and on the following day he died. Just before his death his customary cheerfulness deserted him: he tossed uneasily in the bed, sighed, gazed anxiously about grasped my hand, whispered with an effort: "'T is difficult to die, you know," dropped his head on the pillow, and burst into tears. I did not know what to say to him, and sat silently beside his bed. But Alexyéi speedily conquered this last, belated compassion. . . . "Listen," he said to me:—"our doctor will come to-day, and will find me dead. . . . I can imagine his phiz" and the dying man tried to mimic him. . . . He requested me to send all his things to Russia, to his relatives, with the exception of a small packet, which he presented to me as a souvenir.

This packet contained letters—the letters of a young girl to Alexyéi and his letters to her. There were fifteen of them in all. Alexyéi Petróvitch S*** had known Márya Alexándrovna B*** for a long time—from childhood, apparently. Alexyéi Petróvitch had a cousin, and Má-

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rya Alexándrovna had a sister. In earlier years they had all lived together, then they had dispersed, and had not met again for a long time; then they had accidentally all assembled again in the country, in summer, and had fallen in love—Alexyéi's cousin with Márya Alexándrovna, and Alexyéi himself with the latter's sister. Summer passed and autumn came; they parted. Alexyéi being a sensible man, speedily became convinced that he was not in the least beloved, and parted from his beauty very happily; his cousin corresponded with Márya Alexándrovna for a couple of years longer . . . but even he divined, at last, that he was deceiving both her and himself in the most unconscionable manner, and he also fell silent.

I should like to tell you a little about Márya Alexándrovna, dear reader, but you will learn to know her for yourself from her letters. Alexyéi wrote his first letter to her soon after her definitive breach with his cousin. He was in Petersburg at the time, suddenly went abroad, fell ill in Dresden and died. I have decided to publish his correspondence with Márya Alexándrovna, and I hope for some indulgence on the part of the reader, because these are not love-letters—God forbid! Love-letters are generally read by two persons only (but, on the other hand, a thousand times in succession), and are intolerable, if not ridiculous, to a third person.

A CORRESPONDENCE

I

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

ST. PETERSBURG, March 7, 1840.

MY DEAR MÁRYA ALEXÁNDROVNA!

I have never yet written to you a single time, I think, and here I am writing now. . . . I have chosen a strange time, have I not? This is what has prompted me to it: *Mon cousin Théodore* has been to see me to-day, and—how shall I say it? and has informed me, in the strictest privacy (he never imparts anything in any other way), that he is in love with the daughter of some gentleman here, and this time is bent on marrying without fail, and that he has already taken the first step—he has explained his intentions! As a matter of course, I hastened to congratulate him on an event so pleasant for him; he has long stood in need of an explanation but inwardly I was, I confess, somewhat amazed. Although I knew that everything was over between you, yet it seemed to me In a word, I was amazed. I was preparing to go out visiting to-day, but I have remained at home, and intend to have a little chat with you. If you do not care to listen to me, throw this letter into the fire immediately. I declare to you that I wish to be frank,

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although I feel that you have a perfect right to take me for a decidedly-intrusive man. Observe, however, that I would not have taken pen in hand if I had not known that your sister is not with you: Théodore told me that she will be away all summer visiting your aunt, Madame B***. May God grant her all good things!

So, then, this is the way it has all turned out. . . But I shall not offer you my friendship, and so forth; in general, I avoid solemn speeches, and "intimate" effusions. In beginning to write this letter, I have simply obeyed some momentary impulse: if any other feeling is hiding within me, let it remain hidden from sight for the present.

Neither shall I attempt to console you. In consoling others, people generally desire to rid themselves, as speedily as possible, of the unpleasant feeling of involuntary, self-conceited compassion. . . . I understand sincere, warm sympathy . . . but such sympathy is not to be got from every one. . . . Please be angry with me. . . If you are angry, you will probably read my epistle to the end.

But what right have I to write to you, to talk about my friendship, my feelings, about consolation? None whatever—positively, none whatever; and I am bound to admit that, and I rely solely upon your kindness.

Do you know what the beginning of my letter resembles? This: a certain Mr. N. N. entered the

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drawing-room of a lady who was not in the least expecting him,—who, perhaps, was expecting another man. . . . He divined that he had come at the wrong time, but there was nothing to be done. . . . He sat down, and began to talk God knows what about: poetry, the beauties of nature, the advantages of a good education in a word, he talked the most frightful nonsense. . . . But in the meanwhile the first five minutes had elapsed; he sat on; the lady resigned herself to her fate, and lo! Mr. N. N. recovered himself, sighed, and began to converse—to the best of his ability.

But, despite all this idle chatter, I feel somewhat awkward, nevertheless. I seem to see before me your perplexed, even somewhat angry face: I feel conscious that it is almost impossible for you not to assume that I have some secret intentions or other, and therefore, having perpetrated a piece of folly, like a Roman I wrap myself in my toga and await in silence your ultimate condemnation. . . .

But, in particular: Will you permit me to continue to write to you?

I remain sincerely and cordially your devoted servant—

ALEXYÉI S***.

A CORRESPONDENCE

II

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF NO, March 22, 1840.

DEAR SIR!

Alexyéi Petróvitch!

I have received your letter, and really, I do not know what to say to you. I would even not have answered you at all had it not seemed to me that beneath your jests was concealed a decidedly-friendly sentiment. Your letter has produced an unpleasant impression on me. In reply to your "idle chatter," as you put it, permit me also to propound to you one question: To what end? What have you to do with me, what have I to do with you? I do not assume any evil intentions on your part, on the contrary, I am grateful to you for your sympathy, but we are strangers to each other, and I now, at all events, feel not the slightest desire to become intimate with any one whomsoever.

With sincere respects I remain, and so forth,

MÁRYA B***.

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III

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

ST. PETERSBURG, March 30.

I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna, I thank you for your note, curt as it is. All this time I have been in a state of great agitation; twenty times a day I have thought of you and of my letter. You can imagine how caustically I have laughed at myself; but now I am in a capital frame of mind, and am patting myself on the head. Márya Alexándrovna, I am entering into correspondence with you! Confess that you could not possibly have expected that after your reply; I am amazed at my own audacity never mind! But calm yourself: I want to talk to you not about myself, but about you. Here, do you see: I find it imperatively necessary—to speak in antiquated style—to express myself to some one. I have no right to select you for my confidante—I admit that; but hearken: I demand from you no reply to my epistles; I do not even wish to know whether you will peruse my “idle chatter,” but do not send me back my letters, in the name of all that is holy!

Listen—I am utterly alone on earth. In my youth I led a solitary life, although, I remember,

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I never pretended to be a Byron; but, in the first place, circumstances, in the second place, the ability to dream and a love for reverie, rather cold blood, pride, indolence—in a word, a multitude of varied causes alienated me from the society of men. The transition from a dreamy to an active life was effected in me late . . . perhaps too late, perhaps to this day not completely. So long as my own thoughts and feelings diverted me, so long as I was capable of surrendering myself to causeless silent raptures, and so forth, I did not complain of my isolation. I had no comrades—I did have so-called friends. Sometimes I needed their presence as an electrical machine needs a discharger—that was all. Love . . . we will be silent on that subject for the present. But now, I confess, now loneliness weighs upon me, and yet I see no escape from my situation. I do not blame Fate; I alone am to blame, and I am justly chastised. In my youth one thing alone interested me: my charming ego; I took my good-natured self-love for shyness; I shunned society, and lo! now I am frightfully bored with myself. What is to become of me? I love no one; all my friendships with other people are, somehow, strained and false; and I have no memories, because in all my past life, I find nothing except my own self. Save me! I have not made you enthusiastic vows of love; I have not deafened you with a torrent of chattering speeches; I have passed you by

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with considerable coldness, and precisely for that reason I have made up my mind now to have recourse to you. (I had thought of this even earlier, but you were not free then. . . .) Out of all my self-made joys and sufferings, the sole genuine feeling was the small, but involuntary attraction to you, which withered then, like a solitary ear of grain amid worthless weeds. . . . Allow me, at least, to look into another face, another soul,—my own face has grown repugnant to me; I am like a man who has been condemned to live out his entire life in a room with walls made of mirrors. . . . I do not demand any confessions from you—oh, heavens, no! Grant me the speechless sympathy of a sister, or at least the simple curiosity of a reader—I will interest you, really, I will.

At any rate, I have the honour to be your sincere friend,

A. S.

IV

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

PETERSBURG, April 7th.

I write again to you, although I foresee that, without your approval, I shall speedily hold my peace. I must admit that you cannot fail to feel a certain distrust of me. What of that? Perhaps

A CORRESPONDENCE

you are right. Formerly I would have declared to you (and, probably, would have believed my own words) that, since we parted, I had “developed,” had advanced; with condescending, almost affectionate scorn I would have referred to my past; with touching boastfulness I would have initiated you into the secrets of my present, active life but now, I assure you, Márya Alexándrovna, I consider it shameful and disgusting to allude to the way in which my vile self-love once on a time fermented and amused itself. Fear not: I shall not force upon you any great truths, any profound views; I have none—none of those truths and views. I have become a nice fellow,—truly I have. I ’m bored, Márya Alexándrovna—so bored that I can endure it no longer. That is why I am writing to you. . . . Really, it seems to me that we can come to an agreement.

However, I positively am in no condition to talk to you until you stretch out your hand to me, until I receive from you a note with the one word “Yes.”—Márya Alexándrovna, will you hear me out?—that is the question.

Yours truly,

A. S.

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V

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF NO, April 14.

What a strange man you are! Well, then—
“yes.”

MÁRYA B***.

VI

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

PETERSBURG, May 2, 1840.

Hurrah! Thanks, Márya Alexándrovna, thanks! You are a very kind and indulgent being.

I begin, according to my promise, to speak of myself, and I shall speak with pleasure, verging on appetite. . . . Precisely that. One may talk of everything in the world with fervour, with rapture, with enthusiasm, but only of one's self can one talk with appetite.

Listen: an extremely strange incident happened to me the other day: I took a glance at my past for the first time. You will understand me: every one of us frequently recalls the past—with

compunction or with vexation, or simply for the lack of something to do; but only at a certain age can one cast a cold, clear glance at his whole past life—as a traveller, turning round, gazes from a lofty mountain upon the plain which he has traversed . . . and a secret chill grips the heart of a man when this happens to him for the first time. At any rate, my heart contracted with pain. So long as we are young, that sort of looking backward is impossible. But my youth is over—and, like the traveller on the mountain, everything has become clearly visible to me. . . .

Yes, my youth is gone, gone irrevocably! . . . Here it lies before me, all of it, as though in the palm of my hand. . . .

'T is not a cheerful spectacle! I confess to you, Márya Alexándrovna, that I am very sorry for myself. My God! My God! Is it possible that I myself have ruined my own life to such a degree, have so ruthlessly entangled and tortured myself? . . . Now I have come to my senses, but it is too late. Have you ever rescued a fly from a spider? You have? Do you remember, you placed it in the sunshine; its wings, its legs were stuck together, glued fast. . . . How awkwardly it moved, how clumsily it tried to clean itself! . . . After long-continued efforts, it got itself to rights, after a fashion; it crawled, it tried to put its wings in order . . . but it could not walk as it formerly did; it could not buzz,

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care-free, in the sunshine, now flying through an open window into a cool room, again fluttering freely out into the hot air. . . . It, at all events, did not fall into the dreadful net of its own free will but I!

I was my own spider.

And, nevertheless, I cannot blame myself so very much. Yes, and who—tell me, for mercy's sake—who ever was to blame for anything—alone? Or, to put it more accurately, we are all to blame, yet it is impossible to blame us. Circumstances settle our fate: they thrust us into this road or that, and then they punish us. Every man has his fate. . . . Wait, wait! There occurs to my mind on this score an artfully-constructed but just comparison. As clouds are first formed by the exhalations from the earth, rise up from its bosom, then separate themselves from it, withdraw from it, and bear over it either blessings or ruin, just so around each one of us and from us ourselves is formed—how shall I express it?—is formed a sort of atmosphere which afterward acts destructively or salutarily upon us ourselves. This I call Fate. . . . In other words, and to put it simply: each person makes his own fate, and it makes each person. . . .

Each person makes his own fate—yes! . . . but our brethren make it far too much—which constitutes our calamity! Consciousness is aroused in us too early; too early do we begin to

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observe ourselves. . . . We Russians have no other life-problem than the cultivation of our personality, and here we, barely adult children, already undertake to cultivate it, this our unhappy personality! Without having received from within any definite direction, in reality respecting nothing, believing firmly in nothing, we are free to make of ourselves whatsoever we will. . . . But it is impossible to demand of every man that he shall immediately comprehend the sterility of a mind, "seething in empty activity" . . . and so, there is one more monster in the world, one more of those insignificant beings in which the habits of self-love distort the very striving after truth, and ridiculous ingenuousness lives side by side with pitiful guile . . . one of those beings to whose impotent, uneasy thought there remains forever unknown either the satisfaction of natural activity, or the genuine suffering, or the genuine triumph of conviction. . . . Combining in itself the defects of all ages, we deprive each defect of its good, its redeeming side. . . . We are as stupid as children, but we are not sincere like them; we are as cold as old men, but the common sense of old age is not in us. . . . On the other hand, we are psychologists. Oh, yes, we are great psychologists! But our psychology strays off into pathology; our psychology is an artful study of the laws of a diseased condition and a diseased development, with

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which healthy people have no concern. . . . But the chief thing is, we are not young,—in youth itself we are not young!

And yet—why calumniate one's self? Have we really never been young? Have the vital forces never sparkled, never seethed, never quivered in us? Yet we have been in Arcadia, and we have roved its bright meads! . . . Have you ever happened, while strolling among bushes, to hit upon those dark-hued harvest-flies, which, springing out from under your very feet, suddenly expand their bright red wings with a clatter, flutter on a few paces, and then tumble into the grass again? Just so did our dark youth sometimes expand its gaily-coloured little wings for a few moments, and a brief flight. . . . Do you remember our silent evening rambles, the four of us together, along the fence of your park, after some long, warm, animated conversation? Do you remember those gracious moments? Nature received us affectionately and majestically into her lap. We entered, with sinking heart, into some sort of blissful waves. Round about the glow of sunset kindled with sudden and tender crimson; from the crimsoning sky, from the illuminated earth, from everywhere, it seemed as though the fresh and fiery breath of youth were wafted abroad, and the joyous triumph of some immortal happiness; the sunset glow blazed; like it, softly and passionately blazed our enraptured hearts, and

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the tiny leaves of the young trees quivered sensitively and confusedly above us, as though replying to the inward tremulousness of the indistinct feelings and anticipations within us. Do you remember that purity, that kindness and trustfulness of ideas, that emotion of noble hopes, that silence of plenitude? Can it be that we were not then worthy of something better than that to which life has conducted us? Why have we been fated only at rare intervals to catch sight of the longed-for shore, and never to stand thereon with firm foothold, never to touch it—

Not to weep sweetly, like the first of the Jews
On the borders of the Promised Land?

These two lines of Fet¹ have reminded me of others,—also by him. . . . Do you remember how one day, as we were standing in the road, we beheld in the distance a cloud of rosy dust, raised by a light breeze, against the setting sun? “In a billowy cloud” you began, and we all fell silent on the instant, and set to listening:

In a billowy cloud
The dust rises in the distance. . . .
Whether horseman or pedestrian—
Cannot be descried for the dust.

¹ Afanásy Afanásievitch Shénshin (1820–1892) always wrote under this name.—TRANSLATOR.

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I see some one galloping
On a spirited steed. . . .
My friend, my distant friend—
Remember me!

You ceased. . . . All of us fairly shuddered, as though the breath of love had flitted over our hearts, and each one of us—I am convinced of that—longed inexpressibly to flee away in the distance, that unknown distance, where the apparition of bliss rises up and beckons athwart the mist. And yet, observe this odd thing: why should we reach out into the distance?—we thought. Were not we in love with each other? Was not happiness “so near, so possible”? And I immediately asked you: “Why have not we gained the shore we long for?” Because falsehood was walking hand in hand with us; because it was poisoning our best sentiments; because everything in us was artificial and strained; because we did not love each other at all, and only tried to love, imagined that we did love. . . .

But enough, enough! Why irritate one’s wounds? Moreover, all that is past irrevocably. That which was good in our past has touched me, and on this good I bid you farewell for the time being. And it is time to end this long letter. I will go and inhale the May air here, in which, through the winter’s stern fortress, the spring is forcing its way with a sort of moist and keen warmth. Farewell.

A. S.

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VII

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF NO, Maý 20, 1840.

I have received your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch, and do you know what feeling it aroused in me? —Indignation yes, indignation and I will immediately explain to you why it aroused precisely that feeling in me. One thing is a pity: I am not a mistress of the pen—I rarely write. I do not know how to express my thoughts accurately and in a few words; but you will, I hope, come to my aid. You yourself will try to understand me: if only for the sake of knowing why I am angry with you.

Tell me—you are a clever man—have you ever asked yourself what sort of a creature a Russian woman is? What is her fate, her position in the world—in short, what her life is like? I do not know whether you have ever had time to put that question to yourself; I cannot imagine how you would answer it. . . . I might, in conversation, be able to communicate to you my ideas on that subject, but I shall hardly manage it on paper. However, it makes no difference. This is the point: you surely will agree with me that we women—at all events, those of us who are not

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satisfied with the ordinary cares of domestic life—receive our final education, all the same, from you—from the men: you have a great and powerful influence on us. Look, now, at what you do with us. I shall speak of the young girls, especially of those who, like myself, dwell in the dull places, and there are many such in Russia. Moreover, I do not know others, and cannot judge with regard to them. Figure to yourself such a young girl. Here, now, her education is finished; she is beginning to live, to amuse herself. But amusement alone is not enough for her. She demands a great deal from life; she reads, dreams of love.—“Always of love alone!” you will say. . . . Let us assume that that word means a great deal to her. I will say again that I am not talking of the sort of girl who finds it burdensome and tiresome to think. . . . She looks about her, waits for the coming of him for whom her soul pines. . . . At last he makes his appearance: she is carried away; she is like soft wax in his hands. Everything—happiness, and love, and thought—everything has invaded her together with him, all at once; all her tremors are soothed, all her doubts are solved by him; truth itself seems to speak by his mouth; she worships him, she is ashamed of her happiness, she learns, she loves. Great is his power over her at this period! If he were a hero, he would kindle her to flame, he would teach her to sacrifice her-

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self, and all sacrifices would be easy to her! But there are no heroes in our day. . . . Nevertheless, he guides her whithersoever he will; she devotes herself to that which interests him, his every word sinks into her soul: at that time, she does not know, as yet, how insignificant and empty and false that word may be, how little it costs him who utters it, and how little faith it merits! These first moments of bliss and hope are followed, generally—according to circumstances—(circumstances are always to blame)—are followed by parting. It is said that there have been cases where two kindred souls, on recognising each other, have immediately united indissolubly; I have heard, also, that they are not always comfortable as a result. . . . But I will not speak of that which I have not myself beheld—but that the very pettiest sort of calculation, the most woful prudence, may dwell in a young heart side by side with the most passionate rapture,—that is a fact which, unhappily, I know by my own experience. So, then, parting comes. . . . Happy is that young girl who instantly recognises that the end of all has come, who does not comfort herself with expectation! But you brave, just men, in the majority of cases, have neither the courage nor the desire to tell us the truth you find it more easy to deceive us. . . . I am ready to believe, however, that you deceive yourselves along with us. . . . Parting! It is both

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difficult and easy to endure parting. If only faith in him whom one loves were intact and unassailed, the soul would conquer the pain of parting. . . . I will say more: only when she is left alone does she learn the sweetness of solitude, not sterile but filled with memories and thoughts. Only then will she learn to know herself—will she come to herself, will she grow strong. . . . In the letters of the distant friend she will find a support for herself; in her own she will, perhaps, for the first time, express her mind fully. . . . But as two persons who have started from the source of a river along its different banks can, at first, clasp hands, then hold communication only with the voice, but ultimately lose sight of each other: so also two beings are ultimately disjoined by separation. “What of that?” you will say: “evidently they were not fated to go together. . . .” But here comes in the difference between a man and a woman. It signifies nothing to a man to begin a new life, to shake far from him the past; a woman cannot do that. No, she cannot cast aside her past, she cannot tear herself away from her roots—no, a thousand times no! And so, a pitiful and ridiculous spectacle presents itself. . . . Gradually losing hope and faith in herself,—you can form no idea of how painful that is,—she will pine away and fade alone, obstinately clinging to her memories, and turning away from everything which life around her offers. . . . And he? . . . Seek him! Where is he? And

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is it worth while for him to pause? What time has he for looking back? All this is a thing of the past for him, you see.

Or here is another thing which happens: it sometimes happens that he will suddenly conceive a desire to meet the former object of his affections, he will even deliberately go to her. . . . But, my God! from what a motive of petty vain-glory he does it! In his polite compassion, in his counsels which are intended to be friendly, in his condescending explanations of the past, there is audible such a consciousness of his own superiority! It is so agreeable and cheerful a thing for him to let himself feel every minute how sensible and kind he is! And how little he understands what he is doing! How well he manages not even to guess at what is going on in the woman's heart, and how insultingly he pities her, if he does guess it! . . .

Tell me, please, whence are we to get the strength to endure all this? Remember this, too: in the majority of cases, a girl who, to her misfortune, has an idea beginning to stir in her head, when she begins to love, and falls under the influence of a man, involuntarily separates herself from her family, from her acquaintances. Even previously she has not been satisfied with their life, yet she has walked on by their side, preserving in her soul all her intimate secrets. . . . But the breach speedily makes itself visible. . . . They cease to understand her, they are ready to suspect

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every movement of hers. . . . At first she pays no heed to this, but afterward, afterward when she is left alone, when that toward which she has been striving and for which she has sacrificed everything escapes her grasp, when she has not attained to heaven, but when every near thing, every possible thing, has retreated far from her—what shall uphold her? Sneers, hints, the vulgar triumph of coarse common sense she can still bear, after a fashion but what is she to do, to what is she to have recourse, when the inward voice begins to whisper to her that all those people were right, and that she has been mistaken; that life, of whatever sort it may be, is better than dreams, as health is better than disease when her favourite occupations, her favourite books, disgust her, the books from which one cannot extract happiness,—what, say you,—what shall uphold her? How is she to help succumbing in such a struggle? How is she to live and to go on living in such a wilderness? Confess herself vanquished, and extend her hand like a beggar to indifferent people? Will not they give her at least some of that happiness with which the proud heart once imagined that it could dispense—all that is nothing as yet! But to feel one's self ridiculous at the very moment when one is shedding bitter, bitter tears akh! God forbid that you should go through that experience!

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My hands are trembling, and I am in a fever all over. . . . My face is burning hot. It is time for me to stop. . . . I shall send off this letter as speedily as possible, while I am not ashamed of my weakness. But, for God's sake, not a word in your reply—do you hear me?—not a word of pity, or I will never write to you again. Understand me: I should not like to have you take this letter as the outpouring of a misunderstood soul which is making complaint. . . . Akh! it is all a matter of indifference to me! Farewell.

M.

VIII

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

ST. PETERSBURG, May 28, 1840.

Márya Alexándrovna, you are a fine creature indeed you are . . . your letter has disclosed to me the truth at last! O Lord my God! what torture! A man is constantly thinking that now he has attained simplicity, no longer shows off, puts on airs, or lies but when you come to look at him more attentively, he has become almost worse than he was before. And this must be noted: the man himself, alone that is to say, will never attain to that consciousness, bestir himself as he may! his eye will not discern his own de-

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fects, just as the blunted eye of the printer will not detect errors: another, a fresher eye is required. I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna. . . . You see, I am speaking to you of myself; I dare not speak of you. . . . Akh, how ridiculous my last letter seems to me now,—so eloquent and sentimental! Go on, I beg of you, with your confession; I have a premonition that you will be relieved thereby, and it will be of great benefit to me. Not without cause does the proverb say: “A woman’s wit is better than many thoughts”; and a woman’s heart is far more so—God is my witness that it is so! If women only knew how much better, and more magnanimous, and clever—precisely that—clever they are than the men, they would grow puffed up with pride, and get spoiled: but, fortunately, they do not know that; they do not know it because their thoughts have not become accustomed to returning incessantly to themselves, as have the thoughts of us men. They think little about themselves—that is their weakness and their strength; therein lies the whole secret—I will not say of our superiority, but of our power. They squander their souls, as a lavish heir squanders his father’s gold, but we collect interest from every look. . . . How can they enter into rivalry with us? . . . All this is not compliments, but the simple truth, demonstrated by experience. Again I entreat you, Márya Alexándrovna, to continue writing to me.

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. . . If you only knew all that comes into my mind! . . But now I do not want to talk, I want to listen to you. . . My speech will come later on. Write, write.

Yours truly,

A. S.

IX

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF NO, June 12, 1840.

No sooner had I despatched my last letter to you, Alexyéi Petróvitch, than I repented of it; but there was no help for it. One thing somewhat soothed me: I am convinced that you have understood under the influence of what long-suppressed feelings it was written, and have forgiven me. I did not even read over at the time what I had written to you; I remember that my heart was beating so violently that my pen trembled in my hand. However, although I probably should have expressed myself differently if I had given myself time to think it over, still I have no intention of disclaiming either my words or the feelings which I have imparted to you to the best of my ability. To-day I am much more cool-headed, and have far better control over myself. . . .

I remember that I spoke toward the end of my

letter about the painful situation of the young girl who recognises the fact that she is isolated even among her own people. . . . I will not enlarge further on that point, but rather will I communicate to you a few details; it seems to me that I shall bore you less in that way.

In the first place, you must know that throughout the whole country-side I am not called anything but "the female philosopher"; the ladies, in particular, allude to me by that name. Some assert that I sleep with a Latin book in my hands and in spectacles; others, that I know how to extract some cubic roots or other: not one of them cherishes any doubt that I wear masculine attire on the sly, and that instead of "good morning," I say abruptly: "Georges Sand!"—and indignation against "the female philosopher" is on the increase. We have a neighbour, a man of five-and-forty, a great wit, at least, he has the reputation of being a great wit, and for him my poor person is an inexhaustible subject for jeers. He has related, concerning me, that as soon as the moon rises in the sky, I cannot take my eyes from it, and he shows how I look; that I even drink coffee not with cream but with the moon, that is to say, I set my cup in its rays. He swears that I use phrases in the nature of the following: "That is easy because it is difficult; although, on the other hand, it is difficult because it is easy."

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. . . He declares that I am always seeking some word or other, always yearning "thither," and he inquires, with comic indignation: "Whither is thither? Whither?" He has also set in circulation about me a rumour to the effect that I ride by night on horseback back and forth through the ford of the river, singing the while Schubert's "Serenade," or simply moaning: "Beethoven, Beethoven!" as much as to say—"She 's such a fiery old woman!" and so forth, and so forth. Of course, all this immediately reaches my ears. Perhaps this may surprise you; but do not forget that four years have elapsed since you have sojourned in these parts. Remember how every one gazed askance at us then. . . . Now their turn has come. And all this is nothing. I sometimes happen to hear words which pierce my heart much more painfully. I will not mention the fact that my poor, good mother cannot possibly pardon me for your cousin's indifference; but all my life runs through the fire, as my old nurse expresses it. "Of course,"—I hear constantly,—"how are we to keep up with thee? We are plain folks, we are guided only by common sense; but, after all, when one comes to think of it, to what have all these philosophisings and books and acquaintances with learned people brought thee?" Perhaps you remember my sister—not the one to whom you were formerly not indifferent, but the other,

the elder, who is married. Her husband, you will remember, is a decidedly-ridiculous man; you often used to make fun of him in those days. Yet she is happy: the mother of a family, she loves her husband, and her husband adores her. . . . "I am like all the rest,"—she says to me sometimes;—"but how about thee?" And she is right: I envy her. . . .

And nevertheless I feel that I should not like to change places with her. Let them call me "a female philosopher," "an eccentric," whatever they choose—I shall remain faithful to the end to what?—to an ideal, pray? Yes, to an ideal. Yes, I shall remain faithful to the end to that which first made my heart beat,—to that which I have acknowledged and do acknowledge to be the true, the good. If only my strength does not fail me, if only my idol does not prove a soulless block. . . .

If you really do feel friendship for me, if you really have not forgotten me, you must help me; you must disperse my doubts, strengthen my beliefs. . . .

But what aid can you render me? "All this is nonsense, like the useless running of a squirrel on a wheel," said my uncle to me yesterday—I think you do not know him—a retired naval officer, and a far from stupid man. "A husband, children, a pot of buckwheat groats: to tend husband and children, and look after the pot of groats—that's

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what a woman needs." . . . Tell me, he is right, is he not?

If he really is right, I can still repair the past, I can still get into the common rut. What else is there for me to wait for? What is there to hope for? In one of your letters, you spoke of the wings of youth. How often, how long they remain fettered! And then comes a time, when they fall off; and it is no longer possible to raise one's self above the earth, to soar heavenward. Write to me.

Yours, M.

X

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

ST. PETERSBURG, June 16, 1840.

I hasten to answer your letter, my dear Márya Alexándrovna. I will confess to you that if it were not for I will not say business—I have none—if it were not for my being so stupidly habituated to this place, I would go again to you and would talk my fill, but on paper all this comes out so coldly, in such a dead manner. . . .

I repeat to you, Márya Alexándrovna: women are better than men, and you ought to demonstrate that in deed. Let us men fling aside our

convictions, like a worn-out garment, or barter them for a morsel of bread, or, in conclusion, let them fall into the sleep which knows no waking, and place over them, as over one formerly beloved, a tombstone, to which one goes only now and then to pray—let us men do all that; but do not you women be false to yourselves, do not betray your ideal. . . . That word has become ridiculous. . . . To be afraid of the ridiculous is not to love the truth. It does happen, it is true, that a stupid laugh will make the stupid man, even good people, renounce a great deal take for example the defence of an absent friend. . . . I am guilty in that respect myself. But, I repeat it, you women are better than we are. . . . In trifles you are inclined to yield to us; but you understand better than we do how to look the devil straight in the eye. I shall give you neither aid nor advice—how can I? and you do not need it; but I do stretch forth my hand to you, and I do say to you: “Have patience; fight until the end; and know that, as a feeling, the consciousness of a battle honourably waged almost transcends the triumph of victory.” . . . The victory does not depend upon us.

Of course, from a certain point of view, your uncle is right: family life is everything for a woman; there is no other life for her.

But what does that prove? Only the Jesuits assert that every means is good, if only one at-

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tains his end. It is not true! not true! It is an indignity to enter a clean temple with feet soiled with the mire of the road. At the end of your letter there is a phrase which I do not like: you want to get into the common rut. Look out—do not make a misstep! Do not forget, moreover, that it is impossible to efface the past; and strive as you may, force yourself as you will, you cannot make yourself your sister. You have ascended above her. But your soul is broken, hers is intact. You can lower yourself, bend down to her, but nature will not resign her rights, and the broken place will not grow together again. . . .

You are afraid—let us speak without circumlocution—you are afraid of remaining an old maid. I know that you are already twenty-six years old. As a matter of fact, the position of old maids is not enviable: every one so gladly laughs at them; every one notes their oddities and their weaknesses with such unmagnanimous delight. But if you scan more closely any elderly bachelor,—he deserves to have the finger of scorn pointed at him also,—you will find in him cause to laugh your fill. What is to be done? Happiness is not to be captured by battle. But we must not forget that not happiness but human dignity is the chief goal of life.

You describe your position with great humour. I well understand all its bitterness; your position may, I am sure, be called tragic. But you must

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know that you are not the only one who finds herself in it: there is hardly any man of the present day who does not find himself in it also. You will say that that does not make it any the easier for you; but what I think is that to suffer in company with thousands is quite a different thing from suffering alone. It is not a question of egoism here, but of a feeling of universal necessity.

“All this is very fine, let us assume,” you will say, . . . “but, in point of fact, it is not applicable to the case.” Why is it not applicable? Up to the present day I think, and I hope that I shall never cease to think, that in God’s world everything honest, good, and true is applicable, and sooner or later will be fulfilled; and not only will be fulfilled, but is already being fulfilled, if each one will only hold himself firmly in his place, will not lose patience, will not desire the impossible, but will act, so far as his strength permits. But I think I have given myself up too much to abstractions. I will defer the continuation of my arguments until another letter; but I do not wish to lay down my pen without having pressed your hand warmly, very warmly, and wished you, with all my soul, everything that is good on earth.

Yours, A. S.

P.S. By the way, you say that you have nothing to look forward to, nothing to hope for; how do you know that, allow me to ask?

XI

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF NO, June 30, 1840.

How grateful I am to you for your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch! How much good it has done me! I see that you really are a good and trustworthy man, and therefore I shall not dissimulate before you. I trust you. I know that you will not make a bad use of my frankness and that you will give me friendly advice. That is the point.

You noticed at the end of my letter a phrase which did not entirely please you. This is what it referred to. There is a neighbour here he was not here in your day, and you have not seen him. He . . . I might marry him, if I wished; he is a man who is still young, cultured, wealthy. There are no obstacles on the side of my relatives; on the contrary, they—I know this for certain—desire this marriage; he is a fine man, and I think he loves me. . . . But he is so languid and petty, all his desires are so narrow, that I cannot help recognising my superiority over him; he feels this, and seems to take delight in it, and precisely that repels me from him; I cannot respect him, although he has an excellent

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heart. What am I to do, tell me? Think for me and write me your opinion sincerely.

But how grateful I am to you for your letter! . . . Do you know, I have sometimes been visited by such bitter thoughts. . . . Do you know, I have gone so far as almost to feel ashamed of every—I will not say exalted—but of every trustful feeling. I have shut my book in vexation when it spoke of hope and happiness; I have turned away from the cloudless sky, from the fresh verdure of the trees, from everything that smiled and was glad. What a painful condition this was! I say “was” . . . as though it had passed!

I do not know whether it has passed; I know that if it does not return I shall be indebted to you for it. You see, Alexyéi Petróvitch, how much good you have done, perhaps without yourself suspecting it! Now, in the very heart of summer, the days are magnificent, the sky is blue, bright. . . . It cannot be more beautiful in Italy. But you are sitting in a stifling and dusty town, you are walking on the scorching pavements. What possesses you to do it? You ought, at least, to remove to a villa somewhere. They say that beyond Peterhoff, on the seashore, there are charming places.

I should like to write more to you, but it is impossible: such a sweet perfume has been wafted up to me from the garden that I cannot remain

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in the house. I shall put on my hat and go for a stroll. . . . Farewell until another time, kind Alexyéi Petróvitch.

Yours truly,
M. B.

P.S. I have forgotten to tell you just imagine: that wit, of whom I recently wrote you, — just imagine: he has made me a declaration of love, and in the most fiery terms! At first I thought that he was making fun of me; but he wound up with a formal proposal. What do you think of that, after all his calumnies? But he is positively too old. Last night, to pique him, I sat down at the piano in front of the open window in the moonlight, and played Beethoven. It was so delightful to me to feel its cold light on my face, so consolatory to send forth upon the perfumed night air the noble sounds of music, athwart which, at times, the song of the nightingale was audible! It is a long time since I have been so happy, but do you write to me concerning the thing I asked you about in the beginning of my letter: it is very important.

XII

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

ST. PETERSBURG, July 8, 1840.

My dear Márya Alexándrovna, here is my opinion in two words: throw both the old bachelor and the young suitor overboard! There's no use in deliberating over this. Neither of them is worthy of you—that is as clear as that twice two are four. The young neighbour may be a good man, but I throw him over! I am convinced that you and he have nothing in common, and you can imagine how cheerful it would be to live together! And why be in a hurry? Is it possible that a woman like you—I have no intention of paying compliments, and therefore will not enlarge further—that such a woman as you should not meet some one who will know how to appreciate her? No, Márya Alexándrovna; heed me if you really think that my advice is beneficial.

But confess that you found it pleasant to behold that old calumniator at your feet! . . . If I had been in your place, I would have made him sing Beethoven's "Adelaïda" the whole night through, staring at the moon the while.

But God be with them, with your admirers! It is not of them that I wish to talk with you to-day.

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I am in a sort of half-irritated, half-agitated condition to-day, as the result of a letter which I received yesterday. I send you a copy of it. This letter was written by one of my very old friends and comrades in the service, a kind-hearted but rather narrow-minded man. A couple of years ago he went abroad, and up to the present he has not written to me a single time. Here is his letter. N.B. He is very far from bad-looking.

“ *Cher Alexis:*

“ I am in Naples. I am sitting in my chamber on the Chiaja at the window. The weather is wonderful. At first I gazed a long time at the sea, then impatience seized upon me, and the brilliant idea of writing a letter to thee occurred to me. I have always felt an affection for thee, my dear friend,—Heaven is my witness that I have! And now I should like to pour myself into thy bosom . . . I believe that is the way it is expressed in our elevated language. And the reason I have been seized with impatience is that I am expecting a woman; together we shall go to Baiæ to eat oysters and oranges, to watch the dark-brown shepherds in red nightcaps dance the tarantella, to broil ourselves in the sunshine, to watch the lizards—in a word, to enjoy life to the full. My dear friend, I am so happy that I am unable to express it to you. If I possessed thy power with the pen, oh, what a picture I would

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draw before thine eyes! But, unfortunately, as thou knowest, I am an illiterate man. The woman for whom I am waiting, and who has already made me constantly start and glance at the door, loves me—and as for the way I love her, it seems to me that even thou with thy eloquent pen couldst not describe that.

“ I must tell thee that I have known her for the last three months, and ever since the very first day of our acquaintance, my love has gone on *crescendo*, in the shape of a chromatic scale, ever higher and higher, and at the present moment it has already attained to the seventh heaven. I am jesting, but, as a matter of fact, my attachment to that woman is something extraordinary, supernatural. Just imagine: I hardly ever talk with her, but I stare at her incessantly and laugh. I sit at her feet, I feel that I am frightfully stupid and happy, simply unlawfully happy. It sometimes happens that she lays her hand on my head. . . . And then, I must tell thee, . . . but thou canst not understand it; for thou art a philosopher, and have been a philosopher all thy life. Her name is Nina, Ninetta—as thou wilt; she is the daughter of a wealthy merchant here. Beautiful as all thy Raphaels; lively as powder, blithe, so clever that it is positively amazing that she should have fallen in love with such a fool as myself; she sings like a bird, and her eyes—

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“Forgive me, pray, for this involuntary tirade. . . . I thought the door creaked. . . . No, the rogue has not come yet! Thou wilt ask me how all this is going to end, and what I mean to do with myself, and whether I shall remain here long. I know nothing, and wish to know nothing, about that, my dear fellow. What is to be will be. . . . For if one is to pause and reason constantly

“’Tis she! She is running up the stairs and singing. . . She has come. . . Well, good-by, my dear fellow. . . . I’m in no mood for thee. Pardon me—it is she who has spattered this letter all over: she struck the paper with her damp nosegay. At first she thought I was writing to a woman; but as soon as she found out that it was to a man-friend, she bade me give you her compliments, and inquire whether there are any flowers in your country, and whether they are fragrant. Well, good-by. . . . If you could only hear how she laughs! . . . Silver rings just like that: and what goodness in every sound!—One fairly wants to kiss her feet. Let us go, let us go! Be not angry at this untidy scrawl, and envy thy—

M . . .”

The letter actually was bespattered, and exhaled an odour of orange-flowers . . . two white petals had adhered to the paper. This letter has

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excited me. . . . I have called to mind my sojourn in Naples. . . . The weather was magnificent then also; May was only just beginning; I had recently completed my twenty-second year; but I did not know any Ninetta. I roamed about alone, consumed with a thirst for bliss, which was both painful and sweet,—sweet to the point where it itself bore a sort of resemblance to bliss. . . . What a thing it is to be young! . . . I remember I once went out for a row on the bay at night. There were two of us: the boatman and I but what was it you thought? What a night it was, and what a sky, what stars—how they trembled and crumbled in the waves! With what a liquid flame did the water flow over and flash up under the oars, what perfume was wafted all over the sea—it is not for me to describe, however “eloquent” my pen may be. A French ship of the line lay at anchor in the roadstead. It glowed obscurely red all over with lights; long streaks of red light, the reflection of the illuminated windows, stretched across the dark sea. Merry music reached me in occasional bursts; I recall, in particular, the trill of a small flute amid the dull blaring of the horns; it seemed to flutter like a butterfly around my boat. I ordered the man to row to the ship; twice did we make the circuit of it. Women’s forms flitted past the windows, borne smartly past on the whirlwind of the waltz. . . . I ordered the boatman to put off,

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far away, straight out into the darkness. . . I remember that the sounds pursued me long and importunately. . . . At last they died away. I stood up in the boat and stretched out my arms over the sea in the dumb pain of longing. . . . Oh, how my heart ached then! How oppressive was my loneliness! With what joy would I have given myself at that moment wholly, wholly wholly, if only there had been any one to whom to give myself! With what a bitter feeling in my soul did I fling myself, face down, in the bottom of the boat and, like Repetiloff, request him to take me somewhere or other!

But my friend here experienced nothing of that sort. And why should he? He has managed matters much more cleverly than I did. He is living while I not without cause has he called me a philosopher. . . . 'T is strange! You, also, are called a philosopher. . . . Why should such a calamity overtake us?

I am not living. . . . But who is to blame for that? Why do I sit here in Petersburg? What am I doing here? Why do I kill day after day? Why don't I go to the country? Are not our steppes beautiful? Or cannot one breathe freely in them? Or is it stifling in them? What possesses me to pursue dreams, when, perchance, happiness is within my reach? It is settled: I am going away, I am going away to-morrow, if possible; I am going home, that is, to you—it is all

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the same: for we live only twenty versts apart. What's the use, after all, in languishing here? And why is it that this idea did not occur to me earlier? My dear Márya Alexándrovna, we shall soon meet. But it is remarkable that this thought did not enter my head until this moment! I ought to have gone away long, long ago. Farewell until we meet, Márya Alexándrovna.

July 9th.

I have deliberately given myself twenty-four hours to think it over, and now I am definitively convinced that there is no reason why I should remain here. The dust in the streets is so biting that it makes one's eyes ache. To-day I shall begin to pack; on the day after to-morrow, probably, I shall leave here; and ten days hence I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope you will receive me as of old. By the way—your sister is still visiting your aunt, is she not?

Permit me, Márya Alexándrovna, to press your hand warmly, and to say to you from my soul: farewell until a speedy meeting. I was preparing to leave in any case, but this letter has precipitated my intention. Let us assume that this letter proves nothing; let us even assume that Ninetta would not please any one else—me, for example. Yet I am going, all the same; there is no doubt about that. Farewell for the present.

Yours, A. S.

XIII

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . NO, July 16, 1840.

You are coming hither, you will soon be with us, will you not, Alexyéi Petróvitch? I will not conceal from you that this news both delights and agitates me. . . . How shall we meet? Will that spiritual bond be preserved which, so it seems to me, has already begun to unite us? Will it not break when we meet? I do not know; I am apprehensive, for some reason or other. I will not answer your last letter, although I might say a good deal; I will defer all this until we meet. My mother is greatly delighted at your coming. . . . She has been aware that I was corresponding with you. The weather is enchanting. We will walk a great deal; I will show you the new places which I have discovered . . . one long, narrow valley is particularly nice: it lies between hillocks, covered with forest. . . . It seems to be hiding in their curves. A tiny brook flows along it and can barely force its way through the grass and flowers. . . . You shall see. Come: perhaps you will not find it tedious.

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P.S. You will not see my sister, I think: she is still visiting my aunt. I believe (this is between ourselves) that she is going to marry a very amiable young man—an officer. Why did you send me that letter from Naples? The life here perforce seems dim and pale in comparison with that luxury and that brilliancy. But Made-moiselle Ninetta is wrong: flowers grow and are fragrant—even with us.

XIV

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi
Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . NO, January, 1841.

I have written to you several times, Alexyéi Petróvitch. . . . You have not answered me. Are you alive? Or perhaps our correspondence has begun to bore you; perhaps you have found for yourself a more agreeable diversion than the letters of a rustic young lady can afford you? Evidently you called me to mind for the lack of something to do. If that is the case, I wish you happiness. If you do not answer me this time, I shall not trouble you again; there will be nothing left for me to do but to regret my imprudence, that I have unnecessarily permitted myself to be roused up, have offered my hand and emerged, if only for a moment, from my isolated

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nook. I ought to remain in it forever, lock myself in—that is my portion, the portion of all old maids. I ought to accustom myself to that thought. There is no necessity for coming out into God's sunlight, no necessity for craving fresh air, when the lungs will not bear it. By the way, we are now blocked up with dead drifts of snow. I shall be more sensible henceforth. . . . People do not die of boredom, but it is possible to perish with melancholy, I suppose. If I am mistaken, prove it to me. But I think I am not mistaken. In any case, farewell. I wish you happiness.

M. B.

XV

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya
Alexándrovna*

DRESDEN, September, 1842.

I write to you, my dear Márya Alexándrovna, and I write only because I do not wish to die without having taken leave of you, and without having recalled myself to your mind. I am condemned by the doctors . . . and I myself feel that my life is drawing to a close. On my table stands a rose; before it fades I shall be no more. But that comparison is not quite just. The rose is far more interesting than I am.

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As you see, I am abroad. I have been in Dresden six months. I received your last letters—I am ashamed to confess: I lost several of them more than a year ago, and did not answer you. . . I will tell you presently why. But, evidently, you have always been dear to me: with the exception of yourself, there is no one of whom I wish to take leave, and perhaps I have no one to whom I could bid farewell.

Soon after my last letter to you (I was quite ready to set out for your parts, and was making various plans in advance), there happened to me an episode which had, I may say, a strong influence on my fate,—so strong that here I am, dying, thanks to that event. To wit: I set out for the theatre, to see the ballet. I have never liked the ballet, and have always felt a secret disgust for all sorts of actresses, singers, and dancers. . . . But, obviously, one cannot change his fate, neither does any one know himself, and it is also impossible to foresee the future. In point of fact, nothing happens in life except the unexpected, and we do nothing all our life long but adjust ourselves to events. . . . But I believe I am dropping into philosophy again. Old habit! . . . In a word, I fell in love with a dancer.

This was all the more strange because she could not be called a beauty. She had, it is true, wonderful golden hair, with an ash tinge, and large, bright eyes, with a pensive and, at the same

time, a bold glance. . . . Haven't I cause to know the expression of that glance? I pined and languished for a whole year in its rays! She had a splendid figure, and when she danced her folk-dance, the spectators used to stamp and shout with rapture. . . . But I do not think any one besides myself fell in love with her—at all events, no one fell in love with her as I did. From the very minute that I beheld her for the first time—(will you believe it? all I have to do even now is to shut my eyes, and immediately here stands before me the theatre, the almost empty stage, representing the interior of a forest, and she runs out from behind the side-scenes on the right, with a wreath of vine-leaves on her head and a tiger-skin over her shoulders) —from that fatal minute I belonged to her wholly,—just as a dog belongs to his master; and if now, when I am dying, I do not belong to her, it is merely because she has cast me off.

To tell the truth, she never troubled herself especially about me. She barely noticed me, although she good-naturedly made use of my money. I was for her, as she expressed it in her broken French jargon, "*oun Roussso buon enfan*,"—and nothing more. But I . . . I could no longer live anywhere where she was not; I tore myself at one wrench from all that was dear to me, from my native land itself, and set out in pursuit of that woman.

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Perhaps you think that she was clever?—Not in the least! It sufficed to cast a glance at her low brow, it sufficed to note, if only once, her lazy, heedless smile, in order instantly to convince one's self as to the paucity of her mental abilities. And I never imagined her to be a remarkable woman. On the whole, I did not deceive myself for a single minute on her score. But that did not help matters in the least. Whatever I thought of her in her absence, in her presence I felt nothing but servile adoration. . . . In the German fairytales the knights often fall into that sort of stupor. I could not tear my eyes from her features; I could not hear enough of her remarks, or sufficiently watch every movement of hers; to tell the truth, I actually breathed to her breathing. However, she was good-natured, unconstrained—too unconstrained even; she did not put on airs, as the majority of artists do. She had a great deal of life, that is, a great deal of blood, of that splendid Southern blood, into which the sun of their land must have dropped a portion of his rays. She slept nine hours a day, was fond of good eating, never read a single line of print, unless, perhaps, the articles in the newspapers in which she was mentioned, and almost the sole tender sentiment in her life was her attachment to *il signore Carlino*, a small and greedy Italian who served as her secretary and whom she afterward married. And with such a woman as this I,

who have tasted so many varied intellectual subtleties, I, already an old man, could fall in love! Who could have expected it? I never expected it, at all events. I did not anticipate the part which I should be compelled to play. I did not expect that I should haunt rehearsals, freeze and get bored behind the scenes, inhale the reek of the theatre, make acquaintance with various unseemly individuals . . . what am I saying?—make acquaintance—bow to them. I had not expected that I should carry a dancer's shawl, buy new gloves for her, clean her old ones with white bread (but I did it, I take my oath!), cart home her bouquets, run about to the anterooms of journalists and directors, wear myself out, give serenades, catch cold, lose my strength. . . . I had not expected that I should acquire at last in a certain little German town the ingenious nickname of "*der Kunst-barbar*." . . . And all this in vain—in the fullest sense of the word, in vain! There, that is precisely the state of the case. . . .

Do you remember how you and I, orally and by letter, argued about love, into what subtleties we entered? And when it is put to the proof, it turns out that real love is a feeling not at all resembling that which we imagined it to be. Love is not even a feeling at all; it is a malady, a well-known condition of the soul and body. It does not develop gradually; there is no possibility of

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doubting it; one cannot dodge it, although it does not always manifest itself in identically the same fashion. It generally takes possession of a man without being invited, suddenly, against his will—precisely like the cholera or a fever. . . . It lays hold upon him, the dear creature, as a hawk does upon a chicken; and it will bear him off whithersoever it wishes, struggle and resist as he may. . . . In love there is no equality, no so-called free union of souls and other ideal things, invented at their leisure by German professors. . . . No; in love one person is the slave, the other is the sovereign, and not without cause do the poets prate of the chains imposed by love. Yes, love is a chain, and the heaviest of chains at that. At all events, I have arrived at that conviction, and have reached it by the path of experience. I have purchased that conviction at the price of my life, because I am dying a slave.

Alack, what a fate is mine! one thinks. In my youth I was resolutely determined to conquer heaven for myself. . . . Later on, I fell to dreaming about the welfare of all mankind, the prosperity of my fatherland. Then that passed off: I thought only of how I might arrange my domestic, my family life . . . and I tripped over an ant-hill—and flop! I went headlong on the ground, and into the grave. . . . What master hands we Russians are at winding up in that fashion!

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However, it is high time for me to turn away from all this,—it was time long ago! May this burden fall from my soul along with my life! I wish for the last time, if only for a moment, to enjoy that good, gentle feeling which is diffused within me like a tranquil light as soon as I call you to mind. Your image is now doubly dear to me. . . . Along with it there surges up before me the image of my native land, and I waft to it and to you my last greeting. Live on, live long and happily, and remember one thing: whether you remain in that remote nook of the steppes, where you sometimes find things so painful, but where I should so like to spend my last day, or whether you shall enter upon another career, remember: life fails to disappoint him alone who does not meditate upon it, and, demanding nothing from it, calmly accepts its sparse gifts, and calmly makes use of them. Go forward, while you can: but when your feet fail you,—sit down near the road, and gaze at the passers-by without vexation and without envy: for they will not go far! I have said this to you before, but death will teach any man whomsoever; moreover, who shall say what is life, what is truth? Remember *who* it was that gave no answer to this question. . . . Farewell, Márya Alexándrovna; farewell for the last time, and bear no ill will to poor—

ALEXYÉI.

THE REGION OF DEAD CALM
(1854)

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I

IN a fairly-large recently-whitewashed chamber of a wing of the manor-house in the village of Sásovo, *** county, T*** Government, a young man in a paletot was sitting at a small, warped table, looking over accounts. Two stearine candles, in silver travelling-candlesticks, were burning in front of him; in one corner, on the wall-bench, stood an open bottle-case, in another a servant was setting up an iron bed. On the other side of a low partition a samovár was murmuring and hissing; a dog was nestling about on some hay which had just been brought in. In the doorway stood a peasant-man in a new overcoat girt with a red belt, with a large beard, and an intelligent face—the overseer, judging by all the tokens. He was gazing attentively at the seated young man.

Against one wall stood a very aged, tiny piano; beside it an equally-ancient chest of drawers with holes in place of the locks; between the windows a small, dim mirror was visible; on the partition-wall hung an old portrait, which

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was almost completely peeled off, representing a woman with powdered hair, in a *robe ronde*, and with a black ribbon about her slender neck. Judging from the very perceptible sagging of the ceiling, and the slope of the floor, which was full of cracks, the little wing into which we have conducted the reader had existed for a very long time. No one lived in it permanently; it was put to use when the owners came. The young man who was sitting at the table was the owner of the village of Sásovo. He had arrived only on the previous day from his principal estate, situated a hundred versts¹ distant, and was preparing to depart on the morrow, after completing the inspection of the farming, listening to the demands of the peasants, and verifying all the documents.

“Well, that will do,”—he said, raising his head;—“I am tired. Thou mayest go now,”—he added, turning to the overseer;—“and come very early to-morrow morning, and notify the peasants at daybreak that they are to present themselves in assembly,—dost hear me?”

“I obey.”

“And order the estate-clerk to present to me the report for the last month. But thou hast done well,”—the gentleman went on, casting a glance around him,—“in whitewashing the walls. Everything seems cleaner.”

¹ A verst is two thirds of a mile. —TRANSLATOR.

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The overseer silently swept a glance around the walls also.

“Well, go now.”

The overseer made his obeisance and left the room.

The gentleman stretched himself.

“Hey!”—he shouted.—“Give me some tea! . . . ’T is time to go to bed.”

His servant went to the other side of the partition, and speedily returned with a glass of tea, a bundle of town cracknels, and a cream-jug on an iron tray. The gentleman began to drink tea, but before he had had time to swallow two mouthfuls, the noise of persons entering resounded from an adjoining room, and some one’s squeaking voice inquired:

“Is Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff at home? Can he be seen?”

Vladímir Sergyéitch (that was the name of the young man in the paletot) cast a glance of surprise at his man, and said in a hurried whisper:

“Go, find out who it is.”

The man withdrew, slamming behind him the door, which closed badly.

“Announce to Vladímir Sergyéitch,”—rang out the same squeaking voice as before,—“that his neighbour Ipátóff wishes to see him, if it will not incommode him; and another neighbour has come with me, Bodryakóff, Iván Ílitch, who also desires to pay his respects.”

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Vladímir Sergyéitch made an involuntary gesture of vexation. Nevertheless, when his man entered the room, he said to him:

“Ask them in.” And he arose to receive his visitors.

The door opened, and the visitors made their appearance. One of them, a robust, grey-haired little old man, with a small, round head and bright little eyes, walked in advance; the other, a tall, thin man of three-and-thirty, with a long, swarthy face and dishevelled hair, walked behind, with a shambling gait. The old man wore a neat grey coat with large, mother-of-pearl buttons; a small, pink neckerchief, half concealed by the rolling collar of his white shirt, loosely encircled his neck; his feet shone resplendent in gaiters; the plaids of his Scotch trousers were agreeably gay in hue; and, altogether, he produced a pleasant impression. His companion, on the contrary, evoked in the spectator a less favourable sensation: he wore an old black dress-coat, buttoned up to the throat; his full trousers, of thick, winter tricot, matched his coat in colour; no linen was visible, either around his throat or around his wrists. The little old man was the first to approach Vladímir Sergyéitch, and, with an amiable inclination of the head, he began in the same shrill little voice:

“I have the honour to introduce myself,—your nearest neighbour, and even a relative,

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Ipátóff, Mikhaïlo Nikoláitch. I have long wished to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. I hope that I have not disturbed you."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied that he was very glad to see him, and that he was not disturbed in the least, and would not he take a seat and drink tea.

"And this nobleman,"—went on the little old man, after listening with a courteous smile to Vladímir Sergyéitch's unfinished phrases, and extending his hand in the direction of the gentleman in the dress-coat,—“also your neighbour and my good acquaintance, Iván Ílitch, strongly desired to make your acquaintance.”

The gentleman in the dress-coat, from whose countenance no one would have suspected that he was capable of desiring anything strongly in his life—so preoccupied and, at the same time, so sleepy was the expression of that countenance,—the gentleman in the dress-coat bowed clumsily and languidly. Vladímir Sergyéitch bowed to him in return, and again invited the visitors to be seated.

The visitors sat down.

"I am very glad,"—began the little old man, pleasantly throwing apart his hands, while his companion set to scrutinising the ceiling, with his mouth slightly open:—"I am very glad that I have, at last, the honour of seeing you personally. Although you have your permanent resi-

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dence in a county which lies at a considerable distance from these localities, still, we regard you also as one of our own primordial landed proprietors, so to speak."

"That is very flattering to me,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Flattering or not, it is a fact. You must excuse us, Vladímir Sergyéitch; we people here in *** county are a straightforward folk; we live in our simplicity; we say what we think, without circumlocution. It is our custom, I must tell you, not to call upon each other on Name-days¹ otherwise than in our frock-coats. Truly! We have made that the rule. On that account, we are called 'frock-coaters' in the adjoining counties, and we are even reproached for our bad style; but we pay no attention to that! Pray, what is the use of living in the country—and then standing on ceremony?"

"Of course, what can be better in the country than that naturalness of intercourse,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And yet,"—replied the little old man,—
"among us in our county dwell people of the cleverest sort,—one may say people of European culture, although they do not wear dress-suits.

¹ The Name-day—that is, the day of the saint after whom a person is named—is observed with feasting and congratulation, instead of the birthday. For ceremonious calls, no matter at what hour of the day, a man who has no official uniform must wear his evening suit, on penalty of being considered ignorant or rude, or (in official circles) of being refused admittance.—TRANSLATOR.

Take, for example, our historian Evsiukóff, Stepán Stepánitch: he is interesting himself in Russian history from the most ancient times, and is known in Petersburg—an extremely learned man! There is in our town an ancient Swedish cannon-ball 't is placed yonder, in the centre of the public square . . . and 't was he who discovered it, you know! Certainly! Tzénteler, Antón Kárlitch now he has studied natural history; but they say all Germans are successful in that line. When, ten years ago, a stray hyena was killed in our vicinity, it was this Antón Kárlitch who discovered that it really was a hyena, by cause of the peculiar construction of its tail. And then, we have a landed 'proprietor Kaburdín: he chiefly writes light articles; he wields a very dashing pen; his articles appear in 'Galatea.' Bodryakóff, not Iván Ílitch; no, Iván Ílitch neglects that; but another Bodryakóff, Sergyéi what the deuce was his father's baptismal name, Iván Ílitch what the deuce was it?"

"Sergyéitch,"—prompted Iván Ílitch.

"Yes; Sergyéi Sergyéitch,—he busies himself with writing verses. Well, of course he's not a Púshkin, but sometimes he gets off things which would pass muster even in the capitals. Do you know his epigram on Agéi Fómitch?"

"What Agéi Fómitch?"

"Akh, pardon me; I keep forgetting that you

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are not a resident here, after all. He is our chief of police. The epigram is extremely amusing. Thou rememberest it, I believe, Iván Ilitch?"

"Agéi Fómitch,"—said Bodryakóff, indifferently—

" not without cause is gloriously
By the nobles' election honoured"

"I must tell you,"—broke in Ipátóff,—"that he was elected almost exclusively by white balls, for he is a most worthy man."

"Agéi Fómitch,"—repeated Bodryakóff,

" not without cause is gloriously
By the nobles' election honoured:
He drinks and eats regularly
So why should not he be the regulator of order?"¹

The little old man burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! that is n't bad, is it? Ever since then, if you 'll believe me, each one of us will say, for instance, to Agéi Fómitch: 'Good morning!'—and will invariably add: 'so why should not he be the regulator of order?' And does Agéi Fómitch get angry, think you? Not in the least. No—that 's not our way. Just ask Iván Ilitch here if it is."

Iván Ilitch merely rolled up his eyes.

"Get angry at a jest—how is that possible?"

¹ A pun is intended: *isprávo*, regularly, in orderly manner; *ispravnik*, the chief of police in a rural district.—TRANSLATOR.

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Now, take Iván Ílitch there; his nickname among us is 'The Folding Soul,' because he agrees to everything very promptly. What then? Does Iván Ílitch take offence at that? Never!"

Iván Ílitch, slowly blinking his eyes, looked first at the little old man, then at Vladímir Sér-gyéitch.

The epithet, "The Folding Soul," really did fit Iván Ílitch admirably. There was not a trace in him of what is called will or character. Any one who wished could lead him whithersoever he would; all that was necessary was to say to him: "Come on, Iván Ílitch!"—and he picked up his cap and went; but if another person turned up, and said to him: "Halt, Iván Ílitch!"—he laid down his cap and remained. He was of a peaceable, tranquil disposition, had lived a bachelor-life, did not play cards, but was fond of sitting beside the players and looking into each of their faces in turn. Without society he could not exist, and solitude he could not endure. At such times he became despondent; however, this happened very rarely with him. He had another peculiarity: rising from his bed betimes in the morning, he would sing in an undertone an old romance:

"In the country once a Baron
Dwelt in simplicity rural. . . ."

In consequence of this peculiarity of Iván Ílitch's, he was also called "The Hawfinch," be-

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cause, as is well known, the hawfinch when in captivity sings only once in the course of the day, early in the morning. Such was Iván Ilitch Boddryakóff.

The conversation between Ípátóff and Vladímír Sergyéitch lasted for quite a long time, but not in its original, so to speak, speculative direction. The little old man questioned Vladímír Sergyéitch about his estate, the condition of his forests and other sorts of land, the improvements which he had already introduced or was only intending to introduce in his farming; he imparted to him several of his own observations; advised him, among other things, in order to get rid of hummocky pastures, to sprinkle them with oats, which, he said, would induce the pigs to plough them up with their snouts, and so forth. But, at last, perceiving that Vladímír Sergyéitch was so sleepy that he could hardly keep his eyes open, and that a certain deliberation and incoherence were making themselves evident in his speech, the little old man rose, and, with a courteous obeisance, declared that he would not incommode him any longer with his presence, but that he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing the valued guest at his own house not later than the following day, at dinner.

“And the first person you meet, not to mention any small child, but, so to speak, any hen or peasant-woman,”—he added,—“will point

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out to you the road to my village. All you have to do is to ask for Ipátóff. The horses will trot there of themselves."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied with a little hesitation—which, however, was natural to him—that he would try . . . that if nothing prevented

"Yes, we shall certainly expect you,"—the little old man interrupted him, cordially, shook his hand warmly, and briskly withdrew, exclaiming in the doorway, as he half turned round:—"Without ceremony!"

"Folding Soul" Bodryakóff bowed in silence and vanished in the wake of his companion, with a preliminary stumble on the threshold.

Having seen his unexpected guests off, Vladímir Sergyéitch immediately undressed, got into bed, and went to sleep.

Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff belonged to the category of people who, after having cautiously tested their powers in two or three different careers, are wont to say of themselves that they have finally come to the conclusion to look at life from a practical point of view, and who devote their leisure to augmenting their revenues. He was not stupid, was rather penurious, and very sensible; was fond of reading, of society, of music—but all in moderation and bore himself very decorously. He was twenty-seven years old. A great many young

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men of his sort have sprung up recently. He was of medium height, well built, and had agreeable though small features; their expression almost never varied; his eyes always gleamed with one and the same stern, bright glance; only now and then did this glance soften with a faint shade of something which was not precisely sadness, nor yet precisely boredom; a courteous smile rarely quitted his lips. He had very handsome, fair hair, silky, and falling in long ringlets. Vladímir Ser-gyéitch owned about six hundred souls¹ on a good estate, and he was thinking of marriage—a marriage of inclination, but which should, at the same time, be advantageous. He was particularly desirous of finding a wife with powerful connections. In a word, he merited the appellation of “gentleman” which had recently come into vogue.

When he rose on the following morning, very early, according to his wont, our gentleman occupied himself with business, and, we must do him the justice to say, did so in a decidedly practical manner, which cannot always be said of practical young men among us in Russia. He patiently listened to the confused petitions and complaints of the peasants, gave them satisfaction so far as he was able, investigated the quarrels and dissensions which had arisen between

¹ Male serfs. The women and children did not figure on the revision lists.—TRANSLATOR.

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relatives, exhorted some, scolded others, audited the clerk's accounts, brought to light two or three rascalities on the part of the overseer—in a word, handled matters in such wise that he was very well satisfied with himself, and the peasants, as they returned from the assembly to their homes, spoke well of him.

In spite of his promise given on the preceding evening to Ipátóff, Vladímír Sergyéitch had made up his mind to dine at home, and had even ordered his travelling-cook to prepare his favourite rice-soup with pluck; but all of a sudden, possibly in consequence of that feeling of satisfaction which had filled his soul ever since the early morning, he stopped short in the middle of the room, smote himself on the brow with his hand, and, not without some spirit, exclaimed aloud: "I believe I'll go to that flowery old babbler!" No sooner said than done; half an hour later he was sitting in his new tarantás, drawn by four stout peasant-horses, and driving to Ipátóff's house, which was reckoned to be not more than twenty-five versts distant by a capital road.

II

MIKHAÍLO NIKOLÁEVITCH IPÁTOFF'S manor consisted of two separate small mansions, built opposite each other on the two sides of a huge pond through which ran a river. A long dam,

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planted with silver poplars, shut off the pond; almost on a level with it the red roof of a small hand-mill was visible. Built exactly alike, and painted with the same lilac hue, the tiny houses seemed to be exchanging glances across the broad, watery expanse, with the glittering panes of their small, clean windows. From the middle of each little house a circular terrace projected, and a sharp-peaked pediment rose aloft, supported by four white pillars set close together. The ancient park ran all the way round the pond; lindens stretched out in alleys, and stood in dense clumps; aged pine-trees, with pale yellow boles, dark oaks, magnificent maples here and there reared high in air their solitary crests; the dense verdure of the thickly-spreading lilacs and acacias advanced close up to the very sides of the two little houses, leaving revealed only their fronts, from which winding paths paved with brick ran down the slope. Motley-hued ducks, white and grey geese were swimming in separate flocks on the clear water of the pond; it never became covered with scum, thanks to abundant springs which welled into its "head" from the base of the steep, rocky ravine. The situation of the manor was good, pleasant, isolated, and beautiful.

In one of the two little houses dwelt Mikhaíl Nikoláevitch himself; in the other lived his mother, a decrepit old woman of seventy years. When he drove on to the dam, Vladímir Ser-

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gyéitch did not know to which house to betake himself. He glanced about him: a small urchin of the house-serfs was fishing, as he stood barefooted on a half-rotten tree-stump. Vladímír Sergyéitch hailed him.

“But to whom are you going—to the old lady or to the young master?”—replied the urchin, without taking his eyes from his float.

“What lady?”—replied Vladímír Sergyéitch. —“I want to find Mikhaílo Nikoláitch.”

“Ah! the young master? Well, then, turn to the right.”

And the lad gave his line a jerk, and drew from the motionless water a small, silvery carp. Vladímír Sergyéitch drove to the right.

Mikhaíl Nikoláitch was playing at draughts with The Folding Soul when the arrival of Vladímír Sergyéitch was announced to him. He was delighted, sprang from his arm-chair, ran out into the anteroom and there kissed the visitor three times.

“You find me with my invariable friend, Vladímír Sergyéitch,”—began the loquacious little old man:—“with Iván Ílitch, who, I will remark in passing, is completely enchanted with your affability.” (Iván Ílitch darted a silent glance at the corner.) “He was so kind as to remain to play draughts with me, while all my household went for a stroll in the park; but I will send for them at once. . . .”

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“But why disturb them?”—Vladímir Sergyéitch tried to expostulate. . . .

“Not the least inconvenience, I assure you. Hey, there, Vánka, run for the young ladies as fast as thou canst . . . tell them that a guest has favoured us with a visit. And how does this locality please you? It ’s not bad, is it? Kaburdín has composed some verses about it. ‘Ipátovka, refuge lovely’—that ’s the way they begin,—and the rest of it is just as good, only I don’t remember all of it. The park is large, that ’s the trouble; beyond my means. And these two houses, which are so much alike, as you have, perhaps, deigned to observe, were erected by two brothers—my father Nikolái, and my uncle Sergyéi; they also laid out the park; they were exemplary friends Damon and there now! I ’ve forgotten the other man’s name. . . .”

“Pythion,”—remarked Iván Ílitch.

“Not really? Well, never mind.” (At home the old man talked in a much more unconventional manner than when he was paying calls.) — “You are, probably, not ignorant of the fact, Vladímir Sergyéitch, that I am a widower, that I have lost my wife; my elder children are in government educational institutions,¹ and I have with me only the youngest two, and my sister-in-law lives with me—my wife’s sister; you will see

¹ Of different grades (civil and military), for the children of the nobility or gentry. They are not charities. — TRANSLATOR.

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her directly. But why don't I offer you some refreshment? Iván Ílitch, my dear fellow, see to a little luncheon . . . what sort of vodka are you pleased to prefer?"

"I drink nothing until dinner."

"Goodness, how is that possible! However, as you please. The truest hospitality is to let the guest do as he likes. We are very simple-mannered folk here, you see. Here with us, if I may venture so to express myself, we live not so much in a lonely as in a dead-calm place, a remote nook—that 's what! But why don't you sit down?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch seated himself, without letting go of his hat.

"Permit me to relieve you,"—said Ipátóff, and delicately taking his hat from him, he carried it off to a corner, then returned, looked his visitor in the eye with a cordial smile, and, not knowing just what agreeable thing to say to him, inquired, in the most hearty manner,—whether he was fond of playing draughts.

"I play all games badly,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And that 's a very fine thing in you,"—returned Ipátóff:—"but draughts is not a game, but rather a diversion—a way of passing leisure time; is n't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch cast an indifferent glance at Ipátóff, as though he were thinking to himself,

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“The devil only knows whether it is a game or a diversion,” but, after waiting a while, he said:

“Yes; draughts don’t count.”

“Chess is quite another matter, they say,”—pursued Ipátóff;—“’t is a very difficult game, I’m told. But, in my opinion . . . but yonder come my people!”—he interrupted himself, glancing through the half-open glass door, which gave upon the park.

Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, turned round, and beheld first two little girls, about ten years of age, in pink cotton frocks and broad-brimmed hats, who were running alertly up the steps of the terrace; not far behind them a tall, plump, well-built young girl of twenty, in a dark gown, made her appearance. They all entered the house, and the little girls courtesied sedately to the visitor.

“Here, sir, let me present you,”—said the host;—“my daughters, sir. This one here is named Kátya, and this one is Nástyá, and this is my sister-in-law, Márya Pávlovna, whom I have already had the pleasure of mentioning to you. I beg that you will love and favour them.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow to Márya Pávlovna; she replied to him with a barely perceptible inclination of the head.

Márya Pávlovna held in her hand a large, open knife; her thick, ruddy-blond hair was slightly dishevelled,—a small green leaf had got entangled in it, her braids had escaped from the

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comb,—her dark-skinned face was flushed, and her red lips were parted; her gown looked crumpled. She was breathing fast; her eyes were sparkling; it was evident that she had been working in the garden. She immediately left the room; the little girls ran out after her.

“She’s going to rearrange her toilet a bit,”—remarked the old man, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—“they can’t get along without that, sir!”

Vladímir Sergyéitch grinned at him in response, and became somewhat pensive. Márya Pávlovna had made an impression on him. It was long since he had seen such a purely Russian beauty of the steppes. She speedily returned, sat down on the divan, and remained motionless. She had smoothed her hair, but had not changed her gown,—had not even put on cuffs. Her features expressed not precisely pride, but rather austerity, almost harshness; her brow was broad and low, her nose short and straight; a slow, lazy smile curled her lips from time to time; her straight eyebrows contracted scornfully. She kept her large, dark eyes almost constantly lowered. “I know,” her repellent young face seemed to be saying; “I know that you are all looking at me; well, then, look; you bore me.” But when she raised her eyes, there was something wild, beautiful, and stolid about them, which was suggestive of the eyes of a doe. She had a mag-

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nificent figure. A classical poet would have compared her to Ceres or Juno.

“What have you been doing in the garden?” —Ipátóff asked her, being desirous of bringing her into the conversation.

“I have been cutting off dead branches, and digging up the flower-beds,” she replied, in a voice which was rather low, but agreeable and resonant.

“And are you tired?”

“The children are; I am not.”

“I know,”—interposed the old man, with a smile;—“thou art a regular Bobélina! And have you been to grandmamma’s?”

“Yes; she is asleep.”

“Are you fond of flowers?”—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked her.

“Yes.”

“Why dost thou not put on thy hat when thou goest out of doors?”—Ipátóff remarked to her. —“Just see how red and sunburned thou art.”

She silently passed her hand over her face. Her hands were not large, but rather broad, and decidedly red. She did not wear gloves.

“And are you fond of gardening?”—Vladímir Sergyéitch put another question to her.

“Yes.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to narrate what a fine garden there was in his neighbourhood, belonging to a wealthy landed proprietor named

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N***.—The head gardener, a German, received in wages alone two thousand rubles, silver¹—he said, among other things.

“And what is the name of that gardener?”—inquired Iván Ílitch, suddenly.

“I don’t remember,—Meyer or Müller, I think. But why do you ask?”

“For no reason in particular, sir,”—replied Iván Ílitch.—“To find out his name.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch continued his narration. The little girls, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch’s daughters, entered, sat down quietly, and quietly began to listen. . . .

A servant made his appearance at the door, had announced that Egór Kapítonitch had arrived.

“Ah! Ask him in, ask him in!”—exclaimed Ipátóff.

There entered a short, fat little old man, one of the sort of people who are called squat or dumpy, with a puffy and, at the same time, a wrinkled little face, after the fashion of a baked apple. He wore a grey hussar jacket with black braiding and a standing collar; his full coffee-coloured velveteen trousers ended far above his ankles.

“Good morning, my most respected Egór Kapítonitch,”—exclaimed Ipátóff, advancing to

¹ In those days there was a great difference in the value of silver and paper money: hence the kind is usually specified.—TRANSLATOR.

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meet him.—“ We have n’t seen each other for a long time.”

“ Could n’t be helped,”—returned Egór Kapítonitch in a lisping and whining voice, after having preliminarily exchanged salutations with all present;—“ surely you know, Mikhaíl Sergyéitch, whether I am a free man or not? ”

“ And how are you not a free man, Egór Kapítonitch? ”

“ Why, of course I ’m not, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch; there ’s my family, my affairs. . . . And there ’s Matryóna Márkovna to boot,” and he waved his hand in despair.

“ But what about Matryóna Márkovna? ”

And Ipátóff launched a slight wink at Vladímir Sergyéitch, as though desirous of exciting his interest in advance.

“ Why, everybody knows,”—returned Egór Kapítonitch, as he took a seat;—“ she ’s always discontented with me, don’t you know that? Whatever I say, it ’s wrong, not delicate, not decorous. And why it is n’t decorous, the Lord God alone knows. And the young ladies, my daughters that is to say, do the same, taking pattern by their mother. I don’t say but what Matryóna Márkovna is a very fine woman, but she ’s awfully severe on the score of manners.”

“ But, good gracious! in what way are your manners bad, Egór Kapítonitch? ”

“ That ’s exactly what I ’d like to know myself; ”

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but, evidently, she 's hard to suit. Yesterday, for instance, I said at table: 'Matryóna Márkovna,' " (and Egór Kapítonitch imparted to his voice an insinuating inflection,—“ 'Matryóna Márkovna,' says I, 'what 's the meaning of this, —that Aldóshka is n't careful with the horses, does n't know how to drive?' says I; 'there 's the black stallion quite foundered.'—I-ikh! how Matryóna Márkovna did flare up, and set to crying shame on me: 'Thou dost not know how to express thyself decently in the society of ladies,' says she; and the young ladies instantly galloped away from the table, and on the next day, the Biriúloff young ladies, my wife's nieces, had heard all about it. And how had I éxpressed myself badly? And no matter what I say—and sometimes I really am incautious,—no matter to whom I say it, especially at home,—those Biriúloff girls know all about it the next day. A fellow simply does n't know what to do. Sometimes I 'm just sitting so, thinking after my fashion,—I breathe hard, as perhaps you know,—and Matryóna Márkovna sets to berating me again: 'Don't snore,' says she; 'nobody snores nowadays!'—'What art thou scolding about, Matryóna Márkovna?' says I. 'Good mercy, thou shouldst have compassion, but thou scolest.' So I don't meditate at home any more. I sit and look down—so—all the time. By Heaven, I do. And then, again, not long ago, we got into

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bed; ‘Matryóna Márkovna,’ says I, ‘what makes thee spoil thy page-boy, mátushka?’¹ Why, he ’s a regular little pig,’ says I, ‘and he might wash his face of a Sunday, at least.’ And what happened? It strikes me that I said it distantly, tenderly, but I did n’t hit the mark even then; Matryóna Márkovna began to cry shame on me again: ‘Thou dost not understand how to behave in the society of ladies,’ says she; and the next day the Biriúloff girls knew all about it. What time have I to think of visits under such circumstances, Mikhail Nikoláitch?”

“I ’m amazed at what you tell me,”—replied Ipátóff;—“I did not expect that from Matryóna Márkovna. Apparently, she is . . .”

“An extremely fine woman,”—put in Egór Kapítónitch;—“a model wife and mother, so to speak, only strict on the score of manners. She says that *ensemble* is necessary in everything, and that I have n’t got it. I don’t speak French, as you are aware, I only understand it. But what ’s that *ensemble* that I have n’t got?”

Ipátóff, who was not very strong in French himself, only shrugged his shoulders.

“And how are your children—your sons, that is to say?”—he asked Egór Kapítónitch after a brief pause.

Egór Kapítónitch darted an oblique glance at him.

¹ Literally, “dear little mother.”—TRANSLATOR.

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“My sons are all right. I ’m satisfied with them. The girls have got out of hand, but I ’m satisfied with my sons. Lyólya discharges his service well, his superior officers approve of him; that Lyólya of mine is a clever fellow. Well, Míkhetz—he ’s not like that; he has turned out some sort of a philanthropist.”

“Why a philanthropist?”

“The Lord knows; he speaks to nobody, he shuns folks. Matryóna Márkovna mostly abashes him. ‘Why dost thou take pattern by thy father?’ she says to him. ‘Do thou respect him, but copy thy mother as to manners.’ He ’ll get straightened out, he ’ll turn out all right also.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch asked Ipátóff to introduce him to Egór Kapítonitch. They entered into conversation. Márya Pávlovna did not take part in it; Iván Ílitch seated himself beside her, and said two words, in all, to her; the little girls came up to him, and began to narrate something to him in a whisper. . . . The housekeeper entered, a gaunt old woman, with her head bound up in a dark kerchief, and announced that dinner was ready. All wended their way to the dining-room.

The dinner lasted for quite a long time. Ipátóff kept a good cook, and ordered pretty good wines, not from Moscow, but from the capital of the government. Ipátóff lived at his ease, as

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the saying goes. He did not own more than three hundred souls, but he was not in debt to any one, and had brought his estate into order. At table, the host himself did the greater part of the talking; Egór Kapítónitch chimed in, but did not forget himself, at the same time; he ate and drank gloriously. Márya Pávlovna preserved unbroken silence, only now and then replying with half-smiles to the hurried remarks of the two little girls, who sat one on each side of her. They were, evidently, very fond of her. Vladímír Sergyéitch made several attempts to enter into conversation with her, but without particular success. Folding Soul Bodryakóff even ate indolently and languidly. After dinner all went out on the terrace to drink coffee. The weather was magnificent; from the garden was wafted the sweet perfume of the lindens, which were then in full flower; the summer air, slightly cooled by the thick shade of the trees, and the humidity of the adjacent pond, breathed forth a sort of caressing warmth. Suddenly, from behind the poplars of the dam, the trampling of a horse's hoofs became audible, and a moment later, a horsewoman made her appearance in a long riding-habit and a grey hat, mounted on a bay horse; she was riding at a gallop; a page was galloping behind her, on a small, white cob.

“Ah!” — exclaimed Ipátóff, — “Nadézhda Alexyéevna is coming. What a pleasant surprise!”

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“Alone?”—asked Márya Pávlovna, who up to that moment had been standing motionless in the doorway.

“Alone. . . . Evidently, something has detained Piótr Alexyéevitch.”

Márya Pávlovna darted a sidelong glance from beneath her brows, a flush overspread her face, and she turned away.

In the meantime, the horsewoman had ridden through the wicket-gate into the garden, galloped up to the terrace, and sprang lightly to the ground, without waiting either for her groom or for Ipátóff, who had started to meet her. Briskly gathering up the train of her riding-habit, she ran up the steps, and springing upon the terrace, exclaimed blithely:

“Here I am!”

“Welcome!”—said Ipátóff.—“How unexpected, how charming this is! Allow me to kiss your hand. . . .”

“Certainly,”—returned the visitor; “only, you must pull off the glove yourself.—I cannot.” And, extending her hand to him, she nodded to Márya Pávlovna.—“Just fancy, Másha, my brother will not be here to-day,”—she said, with a little sigh.

“I see for myself that he is not here,”—replied Márya Pávlovna in an undertone.

“He bade me say to thee that he is busy. Thou must not be angry. Good morning, Egór Kapítónitch; good morning, Iván Ílitch; good

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morning, children. . . . Vása,"—added the guest, turning to her small groom,—“order them to walk Little Beauty up and down well, dost hear? Másha, please give me a pin, to fasten up my train. . . . Come here, Mikhaíl Niko-láitch.”

Ipátoff went closer to her.

“Who is that new person?”—she asked, quite loudly.

“That is a neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímir Sergyéevitch, you know, the owner of Sásovo. I ’ll introduce him if you like, shall I?”

“Very well afterward. Akh, what splendid weather!”—she went on.—“Egór Kapítontch, tell me—can it be possible that Matryóna Márkovna growls even in such weather as this?”

“Matryóna Márkovna never grumbles in any sort of weather, madam; and she is merely strict on the score of manners. . . .”

“And what are the Biriúloff girls doing? They know all about it the next day, don’t they?” And she burst into a ringing, silvery laugh.

“You are pleased to laugh constantly,”—returned Egór Kapítontch.—“However, when should a person laugh, if not at your age?”

“Egór Kapítontch, don’t get angry, my dear man! Akh, I ’m tired; allow me to sit down. . . .”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna dropped into an arm-

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chair, and playfully pulled her hat down over her very eyes.

Ipátoff led Vladímir Sergyéitch up to her.

“Permit me, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, to present to you our neighbour, Mr. Astákhoff, of whom you have, probably, heard a great deal.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked up at him from under the brim of her round hat.

“Nadézhda Alexyéevna Véretyeff, our neighbour,”—went on Ipátoff, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch.—“She lives here with her brother, Piótr Alexyéitch, a retired lieutenant of the Guards. She is a great friend of my sister-in-law, and bears good will to our household in general.”

“A whole formal inventory,”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, laughing, and, as before, scanning Vladímir Sergyéitch from under her hat.

But, in the meantime, Vladímir Sergyéitch was thinking to himself: “Why, this is a very pretty woman also.” And, in fact, Nadézhda Alexyéevna was a very charming young girl. Slender and graceful, she appeared much younger than she really was. She was already in her twenty-eighth year. She had a round face, a small head, fluffy fair hair, a sharp, almost audaciously upturned little nose, and merry, almost crafty little eyes. Mockery fairly glittered in them, and kindled in them in sparks. Her features, ex-

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tremely vivacious and mobile, sometimes assumed an almost amusing expression; humour peered forth from them. Now and then, for the most part suddenly, a shade of pensiveness flitted across her face,—and at such times it became gentle and kindly; but she could not surrender herself long to meditation. She easily seized upon the ridiculous sides of people, and drew very respectable caricatures. Everybody had petted her ever since she was born, and that is something which is immediately perceptible; people who have been spoiled in childhood preserve a certain stamp to the end of their lives. Her brother loved her, although he asserted that she stung, not like a bee, but like a wasp; because a bee stings and then dies, whereas it signifies nothing for a wasp to sting. This comparison enraged her.

“Have you come here for long?”—she asked Vladímir Sergyéitch, dropping her eyes, and twisting her riding-whip in her hands.

“No; I intend to go away from here to-morrow.”

“Whither?”

“Home.”

“Home? Why, may I venture to ask?”

“What do you mean by ‘why’? I have affairs at home which do not brook delay.”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked at him.

“Are you such a punctual man?”

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"I try to be a punctual man,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"In our sedate era, every honourable man *must* be sedate and punctual."

"That is perfectly just,"—remarked Ipátóff.—"Is n't that true Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch merely glanced at Ipátóff; but Egór Kapítonitch remarked:

"Yes, that 's so."

"'T is a pity,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"precisely what we lack is a *jeune premier*. You know how to act comedy, I suppose?"

"I have never put my powers in that line to the test."

"I am convinced that you would act well. You have that sort of bearing . . . a 'stately mien, which is indispensable in a *jeune premier*. My brother and I are preparing to set up a theatre here. However, we shall not act comedies only: we shall act all sorts of things—dramas, ballets, and even tragedies. Why would n't Másha do for Cleopatra or Phèdre? Just look at her!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round. . . . Márya Pávlovna was gazing thoughtfully into the distance, as she stood leaning her head against the door, with folded arms. . . . At that moment, her regular features really did suggest the faces of ancient statues. She did not catch Nadézhda Alexyéevna's last words; but, perceiving that the glances of all present were suddenly directed

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to her, she immediately divined what was going on, blushed, and was about to retreat into the drawing-room. . . . Nadézhda Alexyéevna briskly grasped her by the hand and, with the coquettish caressing action of a kitten, drew her toward her, and kissed that almost masculine hand. Márya Pávlovna flushed more vividly than before.

“Thou art always playing pranks, Nádyá,”—she said.

“Did n’t I speak the truth about thee? I am ready to appeal to all. . . . Well, enough, enough, I won’t do it again. But I will say again,”—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch,—“that it is a pity you are going away. We have a *jeune premier*, it is true; he calls himself so, but he is very bad.”

“Who is he? permit me to inquire.”

“Bodryakóff the poet. How can a poet be a *jeune premier*? In the first place, he dresses in the most frightful way; in the second place, he writes epigrams, and gets shy in the presence of every woman, even in mine. He lisps, one of his hands is always higher than his head, and I don’t know what besides. Tell me, please, M’sieu Astákhoff, are all poets like that?”

Vladímir Sergyéitch drew himself up slightly.

“I have never known a single one of them, personally; but I must confess that I have never sought acquaintance with them.”

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“Yes, you certainly are a positive man. We shall have to take Bodryakóff; there’s nothing else to be done. Other *jeunes premiers* are even worse. That one, at all events, will learn his part by heart. Másha, in addition to tragic rôles, will fill the post of prima donna. . . . You have n’t heard her sing, have you, M’sieu Astákhoff?”

“No,”—replied Vladímír Sergyéitch, displaying his teeth in a smile; “and I did not know . . .”

“What is the matter with thee to-day, Ná-dya?”—said Márya Pávlovna, with a look of displeasure.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna sprang to her feet.

“For Heaven’s sake, Másha, do sing us something, please. . . . I won’t let thee alone until thou singest us something, Másha dearest. I would sing myself, to entertain the visitors, but thou knowest what a bad voice I have. But, on the other hand, thou shalt see how splendidly I will accompany thee.”

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

“There’s no getting rid of thee,”—she said at last.—“Like a spoiled child, thou art accustomed to have all thy caprices humoured. I will sing, if you like.”

“Bravo, bravo!”—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, clapping her hands.—“Let us go into the drawing-room, gentlemen.—And as for caprices,”—she added, laughing,—“I’ll pay you off for that! Is it permissible to expose my weaknesses

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in the presence of strangers? Egór Kapítonitch, does Matryóna Márkovna shame you *thus* before people?"

"Matryóna Márkovna,"—muttered Egór Kapítonitch,—“is a very worthy lady; only, on the score of manners”

“Well, come along, come along!”—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him, and entered the drawing-room.

All followed her. She tossed off her hat and seated herself at the piano. Márya Pávlovna stood near the wall, a good way from Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

“Másha,”—said the latter, after reflecting a little,—“sing us ‘The farm-hand is sowing the grain.’”¹

Márya Pávlovna began to sing. Her voice was pure and powerful, and she sang well—simply, and without affectation. All listened to her with great attention, while Vladímír Sergyéitch could not conceal his amazement. When Márya Pávlovna had finished, he stepped up to her, and began to assure her that he had not in the least expected

“Wait, there ’s something more coming!”—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him.—“Másha, I will soothe thy Topknot² soul:—Now sing us ‘Humming, humming in the trees.’”

¹ A little Russian song.—TRANSLATOR.

² The popular nickname among Great Russians for the Little Russians.—TRANSLATOR.

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"Are you a Little Russian?"—Vladimir Sergyéitch asked her.

"I am a native of Little Russia," she replied, and began to sing "Humming, humming."

At first she uttered the words in an indifferent manner; but the mournfully passionate lay of her fatherland gradually began to stir her, her cheeks flushed scarlet, her glance flashed, her voice rang out fervently. She finished.

"Good heavens! How well thou hast sung that!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, bending over the keys.—"What a pity that my brother was not here!"

Márya Pávlovna instantly dropped her eyes, and laughed with her customary bitter little laugh.

"You must give us something more,"—remarked Ipátóff.

"Yes, if you will be so good,"—added Vladimir Sergyéitch.

"Excuse me, I will not sing any more to-day,"—said Márya Pávlovna, and left the room.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed after her, first reflected, then smiled, began to pick out "The farm-hand is sowing the grain" with one finger, then suddenly began to play a brilliant polka, and without finishing it, struck a loud chord, clapped to the lid of the piano, and rose.

"'T is a pity that there is no one to dance

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with!"—she exclaimed.—"It would be just the thing!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her.

"What a magnificent voice Márya Pávlovna has,"—he remarked;—"and with how much feeling she sings!"

"And are you fond of music?"

"Yes very."

"Such a learned man, and you are fond of music!"

"But what makes you think that I am learned?"

"Akh, yes; excuse me, I am always forgetting that you are a positive man. But where has Márya Pávlovna gone? Wait, I'll go after her."

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna fluttered out of the drawing-room.

"A giddy-pate, as you see,"—said Ipátoff, coming up to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but the kindest heart. And what an education she received you cannot imagine; she can express herself in all languages. Well, they are wealthy people, so that is comprehensible."

"Yes,"—articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, abstractedly,—"she is a very charming girl. But permit me to inquire, Was your wife also a native of Little Russia?"

"Yes, she was, sir. My late wife was a Little Russian, as her sister Márya Pávlovna is. My wife, to tell the truth, did not even have a per-

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fectly pure pronunciation; although she was a perfect mistress of the Russian language, still she did not express herself quite correctly; they pronounce *i*, *ui*, there, and their *kha* and *zhe* are peculiar also, you know; well, Márya Pávlovna left her native land in early childhood. But the Little Russian blood is still perceptible, is n't it?"

"Márya Pávlovna sings wonderfully,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Really, it is not bad. But why don't they bring us some tea? And where have the young ladies gone? 'T is time to drink tea."

The young ladies did not return very speedily. In the meantime, the samovár was brought, the table was laid for tea. Ipátóff sent for them. Both came in together. Márya Pávlovna seated herself at the table to pour the tea, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna walked to the door opening on the terrace, and began to gaze out into the garden. The brilliant summer day had been succeeded by a clear, calm evening; the sunset was flaming; the broad pond, half flooded with its crimson, stood a motionless mirror, grandly reflecting in its deep bosom all the airy depths of the sky, and the house, and the trees turned upside down, and had grown black, as it were. Everything was silent round about. There was no noise anywhere.

"Look, how beautiful!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna to Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he ap-

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proached her;—"down below there, in the pond, a star has kindled its fire by the side of the light in the house; the house-light is red, the other is golden. And yonder comes grandmamma,"—she added in a loud voice.

From behind a clump of lilac-bushes a small calash made its appearance. Two men were drawing it. In it sat an old lady, all wrapped up, all doubled over, with her head resting on her breast. The ruffle of her white cap almost completely concealed her withered and contracted little face. The tiny calash halted in front of the terrace. Ipátóff emerged from the drawing-room, and his little daughters ran out after him. They had been constantly slipping from room to room all the evening, like little mice.

"I wish you good evening, dear mother,"—said Ipátóff, stepping up close to the old woman, and elevating his voice.—"How do you feel?"

"I have come to take a look at you,"—said the old woman in a dull voice, and with an effort.—"What a glorious evening it is. I have been asleep all day, and now my feet have begun to ache. Okh, those feet of mine! They don't serve me, but they ache."

"Permit me, dear mother, to present to you our neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímír Sergyéitch."

"I am very glad to meet you,"—returned the old woman, scanning him with her large, black, but dim-sighted eyes.—"I beg that you will love

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my son. He is a fine man; I gave him what education I could; of course, I did the best a woman could. He is still somewhat flighty, but, God willing, he will grow steady, and 't is high time he did; 't is time for me to surrender matters to him. Is that you, Nádyá?"—added the old woman, glancing at Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Yes, grandmamma."

"And is Másha pouring tea?"

"Yes, grandmamma, she is pouring tea."

"And who else is there?"

"Iván Ílitch, and Egór Kapítonitch."

"The husband of Matryóna Márkovna?"

"Yes, dear mother."

The old woman mumbled with her lips.

"Well, good. But why is it, Mísha, that I can't manage to get hold of the overseer? Order him to come to me very early to-morrow morning; I shall have a great deal of business to arrange with him. I see that nothing goes as it should with you, without me. Come, that will do, I am tired; take me away. . . . Farewell, bátiushka;¹ I don't remember your name and patronymic,"—she added, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Pardon an old woman. But don't come with me, grandchildren, it is n't necessary. All you care for is to run all the time. Másha spoils you. Well, start on."

¹ Literally, "dear little father": the genuinely Russian mode of address to a man of any class, as *matushka* ("dear little mother") is for women of all classes.—TRANSLATOR.

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The old woman's head, which she had raised with difficulty, fell back again on her breast. . . .

The tiny calash started, and rolled softly away.

"How old is your mother?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Only in her seventy-third year; but it is twenty-six years since her legs failed her; that happened soon after the demise of my late father. But she used to be a beauty."

All remained silent for a while.

Suddenly, Nadézhda Alexyéevna gave a start.

"Was that—a bat flying past? Aï, what a fright!"

And she hastily returned to the drawing-room.

"It is time for me to go home, Mikhaíl Niko-láitch; order my horse to be saddled."

"And it is time for me to be going, too,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Where are you going?"—said Ipátóff.—"Spend the night here. Nadézhda Alexyéevna has only two versts to ride, while you have fully twelve. And what's your hurry, too, Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Wait for the moon; it will soon be up now. It will be lighter to ride."

"Very well,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"It is a long time since I had a moonlight ride."

"And will you spend the night?"—Ipátóff asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

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“ Really, I don’t know. . . However, if I do not incommode you”

“ Not in the least, I assure you; I will immediately order a chamber to be prepared for you.”

“ But it is nice to ride by moonlight,”—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as candles were brought, tea was served, and Ipátóff and Egór Kapítónitch had sat down to play preference together, while The Folding Soul seated himself silently beside them:—“ especially through the forest, between the walnut-trees. It is both terrifying and agreeable, and what a strange play of light and shade there is—it always seems as though some one were stealing up behind you, or in front of you. . . .”

Vladímír Sergyéitch smirked condescendingly.

“ And here ’s another thing,”—she went on; —“ have you ever happened to sit beside the forest on a warm, dark, tranquil night? At such times it always seems to me as though two persons were hotly disputing in an almost inaudible whisper, behind me, close at my very ear.”

“ That is the blood beating,”—said Ipátóff.

“ You describe in a very poetical way,”—remarked Vladímír Sergyéitch. Nadézhda Alexyéevna glanced at him.

“ Do you think so? . . . In that case, my description would not please Másha.”

“ Why? Is not Márya Pávlovna fond of poetry? ”

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"No; she thinks all that sort of thing is made up—is all false; and she does not like that."

"A strange reproach!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Made up! How could it be otherwise? But, after all, what are composers for?"

"Well, there, that 's exactly the point; but I am sure you cannot be fond of poetry."

"On the contrary, I love good verses, when they really are good and melodious, and—how shall I say it?—when they present ideas, thoughts. . . ."

Márya Pávlovna rose.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna turned swiftly toward her.

"Whither art thou going, Másha?"

"To put the children to bed. It is almost nine o'clock."

"But cannot they go to bed without thee?"

But Márya Pávlovna took the children by the hand and went away with them.

"She is out of sorts to-day,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"and I know why,"—she added in an undertone.—"But it will pass off."

"Allow me to inquire,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch,—“where you intend to spend the winter?"

"Perhaps here, perhaps in Petersburg. It seems to me that I shall be bored in Petersburg."

"In Petersburg! Good gracious! How is that possible?"

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And Vladímir Sergyéitch began to describe all the comforts, advantages, and charm of life in our capital. Nadézhda Alexyéevna listened to him with attention, never taking her eyes from him. She seemed to be committing his features to memory, and laughed to herself from time to time.

“ I see that you are very eloquent,”—she said at last.—“ I shall be obliged to spend the winter in Petersburg.”

“ You will not repent of it,”—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“ I never repent of anything; it is not worth the bother. If you have perpetrated a blunder, try to forget it as speedily as possible—that ’s all.”

“ Allow me to ask,”—began Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, and in the French language;—“ have you known Márya Pávlovna long? ”

“ Allow me to ask,”—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna, with a swift laugh;—“ why you have put precisely that question to me in French? ”

“ Because for no particular reason. . . . ”

Again Nadézhda Alexyéevna laughed.

“ No; I have not known her very long. But she is a remarkable girl, is n’t she? ”

“ She is very original,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, through his teeth.

“ And in your mouth—in the mouth of posi-

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tive persons—does that constitute praise? I do not think so. Perhaps I seem original to you, also? But,”—she added, rising from her seat and casting a glance through the window,—“the moon must have risen; that is its light on the poplars. It is time to depart. . . . I will go and give order that Little Beauty shall be saddled.”

“He is already saddled, ma’am,”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna’s groom, stepping out from the shadow in the garden into a band of light which fell on the terrace.

“Ah! Well, that ’s very good, indeed! Másha, where art thou? Come and bid me good-bye.”

Márya Pávlovna made her appearance from the adjoining room. The men rose from the card-table.

“So you are going already?”—inquired Ipátov.

“I am; it is high time.”

She approached the door leading into the garden.

“What a night!”—she exclaimed.—“Come here; hold out your face to it; do you feel how it seems to breathe upon you? And what fragrance! all the flowers have waked up now. They have waked up—and we are preparing to go to sleep. . . . Ah, by the way, Másha,”—she added:—“I have told Vladímir Sergyéitch, you know,

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that thou art not fond of poetry. And now, farewell . . . yonder comes my horse. . . .”

And she ran briskly down the steps of the terrace, swung herself lightly into the saddle, said, “Good-bye until to-morrow!”—and lashing her horse on the neck with her riding-switch, she galloped off in the direction of the dam. . . . The groom set off at a trot after her.

All gazed after her. . . .

“Until to-morrow!”—her voice rang out once more from behind the poplars.

The hoof-beats were still audible for a long time in the silence of the summer night. At last, Ipátóff proposed that they should go into the house again.

“It really is very nice out of doors,”—he said; —“but we must finish our game.”

All obeyed him. Vladímir Sergyéitch began to question Márya Pávlovna as to why she did not like poetry.

“Verses do not please me,”—she returned, with apparent reluctance.

“But perhaps you have not read many verses?”

“I have not read them myself, but I have had them read to me.”

“And is it possible that they did not please you?”

“No; none of them.”

“Not even Púshkin’s verses?”

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“Not even Púshkin’s.”

“Why?”

Márya Pávlovna made no answer; but Ipátoff, twisting round across the back of his chair, remarked, with a good-natured laugh, that she not only did not like verses, but sugar also, and, in general, could not endure anything sweet.

“But, surely, there are verses which are not sweet,”—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“For example?”—Márya Pávlovna asked him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch scratched behind his ear. . . . He himself knew very few verses by heart, especially of the sort which were not sweet.

“Why, here now,”—he exclaimed at last;—“do you know Púshkin’s ‘The Upas-Tree’?¹ No? That poem cannot possibly be called sweet.”

“Recite it,”—said Márya Pávlovna, dropping her eyes.

Vladímir Sergyéitch first stared at the ceiling, frowned, mumbled something to himself, and at last recited “The Upas-Tree.”

After the first four lines, Márya Pávlovna slowly raised her eyes, and when Vladímir Sergyéitch ended, she said, with equal slowness:

¹ The poem, after describing the deadly qualities of the upas-tree, narrates how a potentate sent one of his slaves to bring him flowers from it. The slave, thoroughly aware of his danger, fulfilled his sovereign’s behest, returned with branches of the tree, and dropped dead.—TRANSLATOR.

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“ Please recite it again.”

“ So these verses do please you? ”—asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“ Recite it again.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch repeated “ The Upas-Tree.” Márya Pávlovna rose, went out into the next room, and returned with a sheet of paper, an inkstand and a pen.

“ Please write that down for me,”—she said to Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“ Certainly; with pleasure,”—he replied, beginning to write.—“ But I must confess that I am puzzled to know why these verses have pleased you so. I recited them simply to prove to you that not all verses are sweet.”

“ So am I! ”—exclaimed Ipátóff.—“ What do you think of those verses, Iván Ílitch? ”

Iván Ílitch, according to his wont, merely glanced at Ipátóff, but did not utter a word.

“ Here, ma’am,—I have finished,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he placed an interrogation-point at the end of the last line.

Márya Pávlovna thanked him, and carried the written sheet off to her own room.

Half an hour later supper was served, and an hour later all the guests dispersed to their rooms. Vladímir Sergyéitch had repeatedly addressed Márya Pávlovna; but it was difficult to conduct a conversation with her, and his anecdotes did not seem to interest her greatly. He probably

would have fallen asleep as soon as he got into bed had he not been hindered by his neighbour, Egór Kapítonitch. Matryóna Márkovna's husband, after he was fully undressed and had got into bed, talked for a very long time with his servant, and kept bestowing reprimands on him. Every word he uttered was perfectly audible to Vladímír Sergyéitch: only a thin partition separated them.

"Hold the candle in front of thy breast,"—said Egór Kapítonitch, in a querulous voice;—"hold it so that I can see thy face. Thou hast aged me, aged me, thou conscienceless man—hast aged me completely."

"But, for mercy's sake, Egór Kapítonitch, how have I aged you?"—the servant's dull and sleepy voice made itself heard.

"How? I'll tell thee how. How many times have I said to thee: 'Mítka,' I have said to thee, 'when thou goest a-visiting with me, always take two garments of each sort, especially' hold the candle in front of thy breast 'especially underwear.' And what hast thou done to me to-day?"

"What, sir?"

"'What, sir?' What am I to put on to-morrow?"

"Why, the same things you wore to-day, sir."

"Thou hast aged me, malefactor, aged me. I was almost beside myself with the heat to-day,

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as it was. Hold the candle in front of thy breast, I tell thee, and don't sleep when thy master is talking to thee."

"Well, but Matryóna Márkovna said, sir, 'That 's enough. Why do you always take such a mass of things with you? They only get worn out for nothing.'"

"Matryóna Márkovna Is it a woman's business, pray, to enter into that? You have aged me. Okh, you have made me old before my time!"

"Yes; and Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"What 's that thou saidst?"

"I say, Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"Yakhím! Yakhím!"—repeated 'Egór Kapítontitch, reproachfully.—"Ekh, you have aged me, ye accursed, and don't even know how to speak Russian intelligibly. Yakhím! Who 's Yakhím! Efrím,—well, that might be allowed to pass, it is permissible to say that; because the genuine Greek name is Evthímios, dost understand me? . . . Hold the candle in front of thy breast. . . . So, for the sake of brevity, thou mayest say Efrím, if thou wilt, but not Yakhím by any manner of means. Yákhim!"¹ added Egór Kapítontitch, emphasising the syllable *Ya*.—"You have aged me, ye malefactors. Hold the candle in front of thy breast!"

And for a long time, Egór Kapítontitch con-

¹ It should be Akím, popular for Iakínthos, Hyacinth.—TRANSLATOR.

tinued to berate his servant, in spite of sighs, coughs, and other tokens of impatience on the part of Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

At last he dismissed his Mítka, and fell asleep; but Vladímir Sergyéitch was no better off for that: Egór Kapítônitch snored so mightily and in so deep a voice, with such playful transitions from high tones to the very lowest, with such accompanying whistlings, and even snappings, that it seemed as though the very partition were shaking in response to him; poor Vladímir Sergyéitch almost wept. It was very stifling in the chamber which had been allotted to him, and the feather-bed whereon he was lying embraced his whole body in a sort of crawling heat.

At last, in despair, Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, opened the window, and began with avidity to inhale the nocturnal freshness. The window looked out on the park. It was light overhead, the round face of the full moon was now clearly reflected in the pond, and stretched itself out in a long, golden sheaf of slowly transfused span-gles. On one of the paths Vladímir Sergyéitch espied a figure in woman's garb; he looked more intently; it was Márya Pávlovna; in the moonlight her face seemed pale. She stood motionless, and suddenly began to speak. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch cautiously put out his head. . . .

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“But a man—with glance imperious—
Sent a man to the Upas-tree”

reached his ear. . . .

“Come,”—he thought,—“the verses must have taken effect. . . .”

And he began to listen with redoubled attention. . . . But Márya Pávlovna speedily fell silent, and turned her face more directly toward him; he could distinguish her large, dark eyes, her severe brows and lips. . . .

Suddenly, she started, wheeled round, entered the shadow cast by a dense wall of lofty acacias, and disappeared. Vladímír Sergyéitch stood for a considerable time at the window, then got into bed again, but did not fall asleep very soon.

“A strange being,”—he thought, as he tossed from side to side;—“and yet they say that there is nothing particular in the provinces. . . . The idea! A strange being! I shall ask her to-morrow what she was doing in the park.”

And Egór Kapítónitch continued to snore as before.

III

ON the following morning Vladímír Sergyéitch awoke quite late, and immediately after the general tea and breakfast in the dining-room, drove off home to finish his business on his estate, in spite of all old Ipátóff's attempts to detain him.

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Márya Pávlovna also was present at the tea; but Vladímir Sergyéitch did not consider it necessary to question her concerning her late stroll of the night before; he was one of the people who find it difficult to surrender themselves for two days in succession to any unusual thoughts and assumptions whatsoever. He would have been obliged to discuss verses, and the so-called "poetical" mood wearied him very quickly. He spent the whole day until dinner in the fields, ate with great appetite, dozed off, and when he woke up, tried to take up the clerk's accounts; but before he had finished the first page, he ordered his tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Ipátóff's. Evidently, even positive people do not bear about in their breasts hearts of stone, and they are no more fond of being bored than other plain mortals.

As he drove upon the dam he heard voices and the sound of music. They were singing Russian ballads in chorus in Ipátóff's house. He found the whole company which he had left in the morning on the terrace; all, Nadézhda Alexyéevna among the rest, were sitting in a circle around a man of two-and-thirty—a swarthy-skinned, black-eyed, black-haired man in a velvet jacket, with a scarlet kerchief carelessly knotted about his neck, and a guitar in his hands. This was Piótr Alexyéevitch Véretyeff, brother of Nadézhda Alexyéevna. On catching sight of

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Vladímir Sergyéitch, old Ipátóff advanced to meet him with a joyful cry, led him up to Véretyeff, and introduced them to each other. After exchanging the customary greetings with his new acquaintance, Astákhoff made a respectful bow to the latter's sister.

"We 're singing songs in country fashion, Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—began Ipátóff, and pointing to Véretyeff he added:—"Piótr Alexyéitch is our leader,—and what a leader! Just you listen to him!"

"This is very pleasant,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Will not you join the choir?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna asked him.

"I should be heartily glad to do so, but I have no voice."

"That does n't matter! See, Egór Kapítónitch is singing, and I 'm singing. All you have to do is to chime in. Pray, sit down; and do thou strike up, my dear fellow!"

"What song shall we sing now?"—said Véretyeff, thrumming the guitar; and suddenly stopping short, he looked at Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting by his side.—"I think it is your turn now,"—he said to her.

"No; do you sing,"—replied Márya Pávlovna.

"Here 's a song now: 'Adown dear Mother Volga'"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, with importance.

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“No, we will save that up for the last,”—replied Véretyeff, and tinkling the strings of the guitar, he struck up, in slow measure, “The sun is setting.”

He sang splendidly, dashingly, and blithely. His manly face, already expressive, became still more animated when he sang; now and then he shrugged his shoulders, suddenly pressed the strings with his palm, raised his arm, shook his curls, and darted a falcon-like look around him. More than once in Moscow he had seen the famous Ilyá, and he imitated him. The chorus chimed in lustily. Márya Pávlovna's voice separated itself in a melodious flood from the other voices; it seemed to drag them after it; but she would not sing alone, and Véretyeff remained the leader to the end.

They sang a great many other songs. . . .

In the meantime, along with the evening shadows, a thunder-storm drew on. From noon-day it had been steaming hot, and thunder had kept rumbling in the distance; but now a broad thunder-cloud, which had long lain like a leaden pall on the very rim of the horizon, began to increase and show itself above the crests of the trees, the stifling air began to quiver more distinctly, shaken more and more violently by the approaching storm; the wind rose, rustled the foliage abruptly, died into silence, again made a prolonged clamour, and began to roar; a surly

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gloom flitted over the earth, swiftly dispelling the last reflection of the sunset glow; dense clouds suddenly floated up, as though rending themselves free, and sailed across the sky; a fine rain began to patter down, the lightning flashed in a red flame, and the thunder rumbled heavily and angrily.

“Let us go,”—said old Ipátóff,—“or we shall be drenched.”

All rose.

“Directly!”—exclaimed Piótr Alexyéitch.—
“One more song, the last. Listen:

“Akh, thou house, thou house of mine,
Thou new house of mine . . .”

he struck up in a loud voice, briskly striking the strings of the guitar with his whole hand. “My new house of maple-wood,” joined in the chorus, as though reluctantly carried away. Almost at the same moment, the rain began to beat down in streams; but Véretyeff sang “My house” to the end. From time to time, drowned by the claps of thunder, the dashing ballad seemed more dashing than ever beneath the noisy rattle and gurgling of the rain. At last the final detonation of the chorus rang out—and the whole company ran, laughing, into the drawing-room. Loudest of all laughed the little girls, Ipátóff’s daughters, as they shook the rain-drops from their frocks. But, by way of precaution, Ipátóff closed the

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window, and locked the door; and Egór Kapí-tonitch lauded him, remarking that Matryóna Márkovna also always gave orders to shut up whenever there was a thunder-storm, because electricity is more capable of acting in an empty space. Bodryakóff looked him straight in the face, stepped aside, and overturned a chair. Such trifling mishaps were constantly happening to him.

The thunder-storm passed over very soon. The doors and windows were opened again, and the rooms were filled with moist fragrance. Tea was brought. After tea the old men sat down to cards again. Iván Ílitch joined them, as usual. Vladímir Sergyéitch was about to go to Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting at the window with Véretyeff; but Nadézhda Alexyéevna called him to her, and immediately entered into a fervent discussion with him about Petersburg and Petersburg life. She attacked it; Vladímir Sergyéitch began to defend it. Nadézhda Alexyéevna appeared to be trying to keep him by her side.

“What are you wrangling about?”—inquired Véretyeff, rising and approaching them.

He swayed lazily from side to side as he walked; in all his movements there was perceptible something which was not exactly carelessness, nor yet exactly fatigue.

“Still about Petersburg,”—replied Nadézhda

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Alexyéevna.—“Vladímir Sergyéitch cannot sufficiently praise it.”

“’T is a fine town,”—remarked Véretyeff;—“but, in my opinion, it is nice everywhere. By Heaven, it is. If one only has two or three women, and—pardon my frankness—wine, a man really has nothing left to wish for.”

“You surprise me,”—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch. “Can it be possible that you are really of one opinion, that there does not exist for the cultured man”

“Perhaps in fact I agree with you,”—interrupted Véretyeff, who, notwithstanding all his courtesy, had a habit of not listening to the end of retorts;—“but that ’s not in my line; I ’m not a philosopher.”

“Neither am I a philosopher,”—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch;—“and I have not the slightest desire to be one; but here it is a question of something entirely different.”

Véretyeff cast an abstracted glance at his sister, and she, with a faint laugh, bent toward him, and whispered in a low voice:

“Petrúsha, my dear, imitate Egór Kapítonitch for us, please.”

Véretyeff’s face instantly changed, and, Heaven knows by what miracle, became remarkably like the face of Egór Kapítonitch, although the features of the two faces had absolutely nothing in common, and Véretyeff himself barely

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wrinkled up his nose and pulled down the corners of his lips.

“Of course,”—he began to whisper, in a voice which was the exact counterpart of Egór Kapítontitch’s,—“Matryóna Márkovna is a severe lady on the score of manners; but, on the other hand, she is a model wife. It is true that no matter what I may have said”

“The Biriúloff girls know it all,”—put in Nadézhda Alexyéevna, hardly restraining her laughter.

“Everything is known on the following day,”—replied Véretyeff, with such a comical grimace, with such a perturbed sidelong glance, that even Vladímir Sergyéitch burst out laughing.

“I see that you possess great talent for mimicry,”—he remarked.

Véretyeff passed his hand over his face, his features resumed their ordinary expression, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna exclaimed:

“Oh, yes! he can mimic any one whom he wishes. . . . He ’s a master hand at that.”

“And would you be able to imitate me, for example?”—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“I should think so!”—returned Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—“of course.”

“Akh, pray do me the favour to represent me,”—said Astákhoff, turning to Véretyeff.—

“I beg that you will not stand on ceremony.”

“And so you too have believed her?”—replied Véretyeff, slightly screwing up one eye, and im-

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parting to his voice the sound of Astákhoff's voice, but so cautiously and slightly that only Nadézhda Alexyéevna noticed it, and bit her lips. —“ Please do not believe her; she will tell you other untrue things about me.”

“ And if you only knew what an actor he is!” —pursued Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—“ he plays every conceivable sort of a part. And so splendidly! He is our stage-manager, and our prompter, and everything you like. It 's a pity that you are going away so soon.”

“ Sister, thy partiality blinds thee,”—remarked Véretyeff, in a pompous tone, but still with the same touch of Astákhoff.—“ What will Mr. Astákhoff think of thee?—He will regard thee as a rustic.”

“ No, indeed,”—Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning. . . .

“ See here, Petrúsha,”—interposed Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—“ please show us how a drunken man is utterly unable to get his handkerchief out of his pocket; or no: show us, rather, how a boy catches a fly on the window, and how it buzzes under his fingers.”

“ Thou art a regular child,”—replied Véretyeff.

Nevertheless he rose, and stepping to the window, beside which Márya Pávlovna was sitting, he began to pass his hand across the panes, and represent how a small boy catches a fly.

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The accuracy with which he imitated its pitiful squeak was really amazing. It seemed as though a live fly were actually struggling under his fingers. Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing, and gradually every one in the room got to laughing. Márya Pávlovna's face alone underwent no change, not even her lips quivered. She sat with downcast eyes, but raised them at last, and casting a serious glance at Véretyeff, she muttered through her set teeth:

"What possesses you to make a clown of yourself?"

Véretyeff instantly turned away from the window, and, after standing still for a moment in the middle of the room, he went out on the terrace, and thence into the garden, which had already grown perfectly dark.

"How amusing that Piótr Alexyéitch is!"—exclaimed Egór Kapítonitch, slapping down the seven of trumps with a flourish on some one else's ace.—"Really, he's very amusing!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna rose, and hastily approaching Márya Pávlovna, asked her in an undertone:

"What didst thou say to my brother?"

"Nothing,"—replied the other.

"What dost thou mean by 'nothing'? Impossible."

And after waiting a little, Nadézhda Alexyéevna said: "Come!"—took Márya Pávlovna by

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the hand, forced her to rise, and went off with her into the garden.

Vladímir Sergyéitch gazed after the two young girls not without perplexity. But they were not absent long; a quarter of an hour later they returned, and Piótr Alexyéitch entered the room with them.

“What a splendid night!” exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as she entered.—“How beautiful it is in the garden!”

“Akh, yes. By the way,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—“allow me to inquire, Márya Pávlovna, whether it was you whom I saw in the garden last night?”

Márya Pávlovna gave him a swift look straight in the eyes.

“Moreover, so far as I could make out, you were declaiming Púshkin’s ‘The Upas-Tree.’”

Véretyeff frowned slightly, and he also began to stare at Astákhoff.

“It really was I,”—said Márya Pávlovna;—“only, I was not declaiming anything; I never declaim.”

“Perhaps it seemed so to me,”—began Vladímir Sergyéitch;—“but . . .”

“It did seem so to you?”—remarked Márya Pávlovna, coldly.

“What’s ‘The Upas-Tree’?”—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

“Why, don’t you know?”—retorted Astá-

khoff.—“ Do you mean to say you don’t remember Púshkin’s verses: ‘ On the unhealthy, meagre soil ’? ”

“ Somehow I don’t remember. . . . That upas-tree is a poisonous tree, is n’t it? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Like the *datura*. . . . Dost remember, Másha, how beautiful the *datura* were on our balcony, in the moonlight, with their long, white blossoms? Dost remember what fragrance poured from them,—so sweet, insinuating, and insidious? ”

“ An insidious fragrance! ”—exclaimed Vladímír Sergyéitch.

“ Yes; insidious. What are you surprised at? They say it is dangerous, but it is attractive. Why can evil attract? Evil should not be beautiful.”

“ Oh, what theories! ”—remarked Piótr Alexyéitch;—“ how far away we have got from verses! ”

“ I recited those verses yesterday evening to Márya Pávlovna,” interposed Vladímír Sergyéitch;—“ and they pleased her greatly.”

“ Akh, please recite them,”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

“ Certainly, madam.”

And Astákhoff recited “ The Upas-Tree.”

“ Too bombastic,”—ejaculated Véretyeff, as though against his will, as soon as Vladímír Sergyéitch had finished.

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“ The poem is too bombastic? ”

“ No, not the poem. . . . Excuse me, it seems to me that you do not recite with sufficient simplicity. The thing speaks for itself; however, I may be mistaken.”

“ No, thou art not mistaken,”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, pausing between her words.

“ Oh, yes; that is a matter of course! In thy eyes I am a genius, an extremely gifted man, who knows everything, can do everything; unfortunately, he is overcome with laziness; is n't that so? ”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna merely shook her head.

“ I shall not quarrel with you; you must know best about that,”—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch, somewhat sulkily.—“ That 's not in my line.”

“ I made a mistake, pardon me,”—ejaculated Véretyeff, hastily.

In the meantime, the game of cards had come to an end.

“ Akh, by the way,”—said Ipátóff, as he rose; —“ Vladímir Sergyéitch, one of the local landed proprietors, a neighbour, a very fine and worthy man, Akílin, Gavríla Stepánitch, has commissioned me to ask you whether you will not do him the honour to be present at his ball,—that is, I just put it so, for beauty of style, and said ‘ ball,’ but it is only an evening party with dancing, quite informal. He would have called upon

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you himself without fail, only he was afraid of disturbing you."

"I am much obliged to the gentleman,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but it is imperatively necessary that I should return home. . . ."

"Why—but when do you suppose the ball takes place? 'T is to-morrow. To-morrow is Gavríla Stepánitch's Name-day. One day more won't matter, and how much pleasure you will give him! And it's only ten versts from here. If you will allow, we will take you thither."

"Really, I don't know,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"And are you going?"

"The whole family! And Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Piótr Alexyéitch,—everybody is going!"

"You may invite me on the spot for the fifth quadrille, if you like,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"The first four are already bespoken."

"You are very kind; and are you already engaged for the mazurka?"

"I? Let me think no, I think I am not."

"In that case, if you will be so kind, I should like to have the honour"

"That means that you will go? Very good. Certainly."

"Bravo!"—exclaimed Ipátóff.—"Well, Vladímir Sergyéitch, you have put us under an ob-

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ligation. Gavrílo Stepánitch will simply go into raptures. Is n't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch would have preferred to hold his peace, according to his wont, but thought it better to utter a sound of approval.

"What possessed thee,"—said Piótr Alexyéitch an hour later to his sister, as he sat with her in a light two-wheeled cart, which he was driving himself,—“what possessed thee to saddle thyself with that sour-visaged fellow for the mazurka?"

"I have reasons of my own for that,"—replied Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"What reasons?—permit me to inquire."

"That 's my secret."

"Oho!"

And with his whip he lightly flicked the horse, which was beginning to prick up its ears, snort, and shy. It was frightened by the shadow of a huge willow bush which fell across the road, dimly illuminated by the moon.

"And shalt thou dance with Másha?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna, in her turn, questioned her brother.

"Yes," he said indifferently.

"Yes! yes!"—repeated Nadézhda Alexyéevna, reproachfully.—“You men,”—she added, after a brief pause,—“positively do not deserve to be loved by nice women."

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"Dost think so? Well, and that sour-visaged Petersburger—does he deserve it?"

"Sooner than thou."

"Really!"

And Piótr Alexyéitch recited, with a sigh:

"What a mission, O Creator,

To be the brother of a grown-up sister!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing.

"I cause thee a great deal of trouble, there 's no denying that. I have a commission to thee."

"Really?—I had n't the slightest suspicion of that."

"I 'm speaking of Másha."

"On what score?"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna's face assumed a slight expression of pain.

"Thou knowest thyself,"—she said softly.

"Ah, I understand!—What 's to be done, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, ma'am? I love to drink with a good friend, ma'am, sinful man that I am; I love it, ma'am."

"Stop, brother, please don't talk like that! . . . This is no jesting matter."

"Tram-tram-tam-poom!"—muttered Piótr Alexyéitch through his teeth.

"It is thy perdition, and thou jestest. . . ."

"The farm-hand is sowing the grain, his wife does not agree"

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struck up Piótr Alexyéitch loudly, slapped the horse with the reins, and it dashed onward at a brisk trot.

IV

ON reaching home Véretyeff did not undress, and a couple of hours later, when the flush of dawn was just colouring the sky, he was no longer in the house.

Half-way between his estate and Ipátóff's, on the very brink of a broad ravine, stood a small birch grove. The young trees grew very close together, and no axe had yet touched their graceful trunks; a shadow which was not dense, but continuous, spread from the tiny leaves on the soft, thin grass, all mottled with the golden heads of buttercups,¹ the white dots of wood-campagna, and the tiny deep-crimson crosses of wild pinks. The recently-risen sun flooded the whole grove with a powerful though not brilliant light; dewdrops glittered everywhere, while here and there large drops kindled and glowed red; everything exhaled freshness, life, and that innocent triumph of the first moments of the morning, when everything is still so bright and still so silent. The only thing audible was the carolling voices of the larks above the distant fields, and in the grove itself two or three small birds were

¹ The unpoetical Russian name is "chicken-blindness" (night-blindness).—TRANSLATOR.

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executing, in a leisurely manner, their brief songs, and then, apparently, listening to see how their performance had turned out. From the damp earth arose a strong, healthy scent; a pure, light breeze fluttered all about in cool gusts. Morning, glorious morning, breathed forth from everything—everything looked and smiled of the morning, like the rosy, freshly-washed face of a baby who has just waked up.

Not far from the ravine, in the middle of a small glade, on an outspread cloak, sat Véretyeff. Márya Pávlovna was standing beside him, leaning against a birch-tree, with her hands clasped behind her.

Both were silent. Márya Pávlovna was gazing fixedly into the far distance; a white scarf had slipped from her head to her shoulders, the errant breeze was stirring and lifting the ends of her hastily-knotted hair. Véretyeff sat bent over, tapping the grass with a small branch.

“ Well,”—he began at last,—“ are you angry with me? ”

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

Véretyeff darted a glance at her.

“ Másha, are you angry? ”—he repeated.

Márya Pávlovna scanned him with a swift glance from head to foot, turned slightly away, and said:

“ Yes.”

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“What for?”—asked Véretyeff, and flung away his branch.

Again Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

“But, as a matter of fact, you have a right to be angry with me,”—began Véretyeff, after a brief pause.—“You must regard me as a man who is not only frivolous, but even”

“You do not understand me,”—interrupted Márya Pávlovna.—“I am not in the least angry with you on my own account.”

“On whose account, then?”

“On your own.”

Véretyeff raised his head and laughed.

“Ah! I understand!”—he said.—“Again! again the thought is beginning to agitate you: ‘Why don’t I make something of myself?’ Do you know what, Másha, you are a wonderful being; by Heaven, you are! You worry so much about other people and so little about yourself. There is not a bit of egoism in you; really, really there is n’t. There’s no other girl in the world like you. It’s a pity about one thing: I decidedly am not worthy of your affection; I say that without jesting.”

“So much the worse for you. You feel and do nothing.”—Again Véretyeff laughed.

“Másha, take your hand from behind your back, and give it to me,”—he said, with insinuating affection in his voice.

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Márya Pávlovna merely shrugged her shoulders.

“Give me your beautiful, honest hand; I want to kiss it respectfully and tenderly. Thus does a giddy-pated scholar kiss the hand of his condescending tutor.”

And Véretyeff reached out toward Márya Pávlovna.

“Enough of that!”—said she. “You are always laughing and jesting, and you will jest away your life like that.”

“H’m! jest away my life! A new expression! But I hope, Márya Pávlovna, that you used the verb ‘to jest’ in the active sense?”

Márya Pávlovna contracted her brows.

“Enough of that, Véretyeff,”—she repeated.

“To jest away life,”—went on Véretyeff, half rising;—“but you are imagining me as worse than I am; you are wasting your life in seriousness. Do you know, Másha, you remind me of a scene from Púshkin’s ‘Don Juan.’ You have not read Púshkin’s ‘Don Juan’?”

“No.”

“Yes, I had forgotten, you see, that you do not read verses.—In that poem guests come to a certain Laura; she drives them all away and remains alone with Carlos. The two go out on the balcony; the night is wonderful. Laura admires, and Carlos suddenly begins to demonstrate to her that she will grow old in course of

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time.—‘Well,’ replies Laura, ‘it may be cold and rainy in Paris now, but here, with us, “the night is redolent of orange and of laurel.” Why make guesses at the future?’ Look around you, Másha; is it not beautiful here? See how everything is enjoying life, how young everything is. And are n’t we young ourselves?”

Véretieff approached Márya Pávlovna; she did not move away from him, but she did not turn her head toward him.

“Smile, Másha,”—he went on;—“only with your kind smile, not with your usual grin. I love your kind smile. Raise your proud, stern eyes.—What ails you? You turn away. Stretch out your hand to me, at least.”

“Akh, Véretieff,”—began Másha;—“you know that I do not understand how to express myself. You have told me about that Laura. But she was a woman, you see. . . . A woman may be pardoned for not thinking of the future.”

“When you speak, Másha,”—returned Véretieff,—“you blush incessantly with self-love and modesty: the blood fairly flows in a crimson flood into your cheeks. I’m awfully fond of that in you.”

Márya Pávlovna looked Véretieff straight in the eye.

“Farewell,”—she said, and threw her scarf over her head.

Véretieff held her back. “Enough, enough.

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Stay!"—he cried.—"Come, why are you going? Issue your commands! Do you want me to enter the service, to become an agriculturist? Do you want me to publish romances with accompaniment for the guitar; to print a collection of poems, or of drawings; to busy myself with painting, sculpture, dancing on the rope? I'll do anything, anything, anything you command, if only you will be satisfied with me! Come, really now, Másha, believe me."

Again Márya Pávlovna looked at him.

"You will do all that in words only, not in deeds. You declare that you will obey me"

"Of course I do."

"You obey, but how many times have I begged you"

"What about?"

Márya Pávlovna hesitated.

"Not to drink liquor,"—she said at last.

Véretýeff laughed.

"Ekh, Másha! And you are at it, too! My sister is worrying herself to death over that also. But, in the first place, I'm not a drunkard at all; and in the second place, do you know why I drink? Look yonder, at that swallow. . . . Do you see how boldly it manages its tiny body, —and hurls it wherever it wishes? Now it has soared aloft, now it has darted downward. It has even piped with joy: do you hear? So that 's why I drink, Másha, in order to feel those same

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sensations which that swallow experiences. . . .
Hurl yourself whithersoever you will, soar where-
soever you take a fancy”

“But to what end?”—interrupted Másha.

“What do you mean by that? What is one to
live on then?”

“But is n’t it possible to get along without
liquor?”

“No, it is not; we are all damaged, rumped.
There ’s passion it produces the same
effect. That ’s why I love you.”

“Like wine. . . . I ’m much obliged to you.”

“No, Másha, I do not love you like wine.
Stay, I ’ll prove it to you sometime,—when we are
married, say, and go abroad together. Do you
know, I am planning in advance how I shall lead
you in front of the Venus of Milo. At this
point it will be appropriate to say:

“And when she stands with serious eyes
Before the Chyprian of Milos—
Twain are they, and the marble in comparison
Suffers, it would seem, affront.

“What makes me talk constantly in poetry to-
day? It must be that this morning is affecting
me. What air! ’T is exactly as though one were
quaffing wine.”

“Wine again,”—remarked Márya Pávlovna.

“What of that! A morning like this, and you
with me, and not feel intoxicated! ‘With serious

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eyes’ Yes,”—pursued Véretyeff, gazing intently at Márya Pávlovna,—“that is so. . . . For I remember, I have beheld, rarely, but yet I have beheld these dark, magnificent eyes, I have beheld them tender! And how beautiful they are then! Come, don’t turn away, Másha; pray, smile at least show me your eyes merry, at all events, if they will not vouchsafe me a tender glance.”

“Stop, Véretyeff,”—said Márya Pávlovna.—“Release me! It is time for me to go home.”

“But I ’m going to make you laugh,”—interposed Véretyeff; “by Heaven, I will make you laugh. Eh, by the way, yonder runs a hare. . . .”

“Where?”—asked Márya Pávlovna.

“Yonder, beyond the ravine, across the field of oats. Some one must have startled it; they don’t run in the morning. I ’ll stop it on the instant, if you like.”

And Véretyeff whistled loudly. The hare immediately squatted, twitched its ears, drew up its fore paws, straightened itself up, munched, sniffed the air, and again began to munch with its lips. Véretyeff promptly squatted down on his heels, like the hare, and began to twitch his nose, sniff, and munch like it. The hare passed its paws twice across its muzzle and shook itself,—they must have been wet with dew,—stiffened its ears, and bounded onward. Véretyeff rubbed his hands over his cheeks and shook him-

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self also. . . . Márya Pávlovna could not hold out, and burst into a laugh.

“Bravo!”—cried Véretyeff, springing up. “Bravo! That ’s exactly the point—you are not a coquette. Do you know, if any fashionable young lady had such teeth as you have she would laugh incessantly. But that ’s precisely why I love you, Másha, because you are not a fashionable young lady, don’t laugh without cause, and don’t wear gloves on your hands, which it is a joy to kiss, because they are sunburned, and one feels their strength. . . . I love you, because you don’t argue, because you are proud, taciturn, don’t read books, don’t love poetry”

“I ’ll recite some verses to you, shall I?”—Márya Pávlovna interrupted him, with a certain peculiar expression on her face.

“Verses?”—inquired Véretyeff, in amazement.

“Yes, verses; the very ones which that Petersburg gentleman recited last night.”

“‘The Upas-Tree ’ again? So you really were declaiming in the garden, by night? That ’s just like you. . . . But does it really please you so much?”

“Yes, it does.”

“Recite it.”

Márya Pávlovna was seized with shyness. . . .

“Recite it, recite it,”—repeated Véretyeff.

Márya Pávlovna began to recite; Véretyeff

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stood in front of her, with his arms folded on his breast, and bent himself to listen. At the first line Márya Pávlovna raised her eyes heavenward; she did not wish to encounter Véretyeff's gaze. She recited in her even, soft voice, which reminded one of the sound of a violoncello; but when she reached the lines:

“And the poor slave expired at the feet
Of his invincible sovereign”

her voice began to quiver, her impassive, haughty brows rose ingenuously, like those of a little girl, and her eyes, with involuntary devotion, fixed themselves on Véretyeff. . . .

He suddenly threw himself at her feet and embraced her knees.

“I am thy slave!”—he cried.—“I am at thy feet, thou art my sovereign, my goddess, my ox-eyed Hera, my Medea”

Márya Pávlovna attempted to repulse him, but her hands sank helplessly in his thick curls, and, with a smile of confusion, she dropped her head on her breast. . . .

V

GAVRÍLA STEPÁNITCH AKÍLIN, at whose house the ball was appointed, belonged to the category of landed proprietors who evoked the admiration

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of the neighbours by their ingenuity in living well on very insignificant means. Although he did not own more than four hundred serfs, he was in the habit of entertaining the whole government in a huge stone mansion, with a tower and a flag on the tower, erected by himself. The property had descended to him from his father, and had never been distinguished for being well ordered; Gavríla Stepánitch had been an absentee for a long time—had been in the service in Petersburg. At last, twenty-five years before the date of our story, he returned to his native place, with the rank of Collegiate Assessor,¹ and, with a wife and three daughters, had simultaneously undertaken reorganisation and building operations, had gradually set up an orchestra, and had begun to give dinners. At first everybody had prophesied for him speedy and inevitable ruin; more than once rumours had become current to the effect that Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was to be sold under the hammer; but the years passed, dinners, balls, banquets, concerts, followed each other in their customary order, new buildings sprang out of the earth like mushrooms, and still Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was not sold under the hammer, and he himself continued to live as before, and had even grown stout of late.

¹ The eighth (out of fourteen) in Peter the Great's Table of Ranks.—TRANSLATOR.

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Then the neighbours' gossip took another direction; they began to hint at certain vast sums which were said to be concealed; they talked of a treasure. . . . "And if he were only a good farmer," so argued the nobles among themselves; "but that's just what he is n't, you know! Not at all! So it is deserving of surprise, and incomprehensible." However that may have been, every one went very gladly to Gavríla Stepánitch's house. He received his guests cordially, and played cards for any stake they liked. He was a grey-haired little man, with a small, pointed head, a yellow face, and yellow eyes, always carefully shaven and perfumed with eau-de-cologne; both on ordinary days and on holidays he wore a roomy blue dress-coat, buttoned to the chin, a large stock, in which he had a habit of hiding his chin, and he was foppishly fastidious about his linen; he screwed up his eyes and thrust out his lips when he took snuff, and spoke very politely and softly, incessantly employing the letter *s*.¹

In appearance, Gavríla Stepánitch was not distinguished by vivacity, and, in general, his exterior was not prepossessing, and he did not look like a clever man, although, at times, craft gleamed in his eye. He had settled his two elder daughters advantageously; the youngest was

¹ "S," a polite addition to sentences, equivalent to a contraction of the words for "sir" or "madam."—TRANSLATOR.

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still at home, and of marriageable age. Gavríla Stepánitch also had a wife, an insignificant and wordless being.

At seven o'clock in the evening, Vladímir Sergyéitch presented himself at the Ipátóffs' in dress-suit and white gloves. He found them all entirely dressed; the little girls were sitting sedately, afraid of mussing their starched white frocks; old Ipátóff, on catching sight of Vladímir Sergyéitch in his dress-suit, affectionately upbraided him, and pointed to his own frock-coat; Márya Pávlovna wore a muslin gown of a deep rose colour, which was extremely becoming to her. Vladímir Sergyéitch paid her several compliments. Márya Pávlovna's beauty attracted him, although she was evidently shy of him; he also liked Nadézhda Alexyéevna, but her free-and-easy manners somewhat disconcerted him. Moreover, in her remarks, her looks, her very smiles, mockery frequently peeped forth, and this disturbed his citified and well-bred soul. He would not have been averse to making fun of others with her, but it was unpleasant to him to think that she was probably capable of jeering at himself.

The ball had already begun; a good many guests had assembled, and the home-bred orchestra was crashing and booming and screeching in the gallery, when the Ipátóff family, accompanied by Vladímir Sergyéitch, entered the hall of

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the Akílin house. The host met them at the very door, thanked Vladímir Sergyéitch for his tender procuration of an agreeable surprise,—that was the way he expressed himself,—and, taking Ipát-off's arm, he led him to the drawing-room, to the card-tables. Gavríla Stepánitch had received a bad education, and everything in his house, both the music and the furniture and the food and the wines, not only could not be called first-class, but were not even fit to be ranked as second-class. On the other hand, there was plenty of everything, and he himself did not put on airs, was not arrogant . . . the nobles demanded nothing more from him, and were entirely satisfied with his entertainment. At supper, for instance, the caviare was served cut up in chunks and heavily salted; but no one objected to your taking it in your fingers, and there was plenty wherewith to wash it down: wines which were cheap, it is true, but were made from grapes, nevertheless, and not some other concoction. The springs in Gavríla Stepánitch's furniture were rather uncomfortable, owing to their stiffness and inflexibility; but, not to mention the fact that there were no springs whatever in many of the couches and easy-chairs, any one could place under him a worsted cushion, and there was a great number of such cushions lying about, embroidered by the hands of Gavríla Stepánitch's spouse herself—and then there was nothing left to desire.

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In a word, Gavríla Stepánitch's house could not possibly have been better adapted to the sociable and unceremonious style of ideas of the inhabitants of *** county, and it was solely owing to Mr. Akílin's modesty that at the assemblies of the nobility he was not elected Marshal, but a retired Major Podpékin, a greatly respected and worthy man, despite the fact that he brushed his hair over to the right temple from the left ear, dyed his moustache a lilac hue, and as he suffered from asthma, had of late fallen into melancholy.

So, then, the ball had already begun. They were dancing a quadrille of ten pairs. The cavaliers were the officers of a regiment stationed close by, and divers not very youthful squires, and two or three officials from the town. Everything was as it should be, everything was proceeding in due order. The Marshal of the Nobility was playing cards with a retired Actual Councillor of State,¹ and a wealthy gentleman, the owner of three thousand souls. The actual state councillor wore on his forefinger a ring with a diamond, talked very softly, kept the heels of his boots closely united, and did not move them from the position used by dancers of former days, and did not turn his head, which was half concealed by a capital velvet collar. The wealthy gentleman, on the contrary, was constantly laughing at something or other, elevating his eyebrows, and

¹ The fourth from the top in the Table of Ranks. — TRANSLATOR.

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flashing the whites of his eyes. The poet Boddryakóff, a man of shy and clumsy aspect, was chatting in a corner with the learned historian Evsiukóff: each had clutched the other by the button. Beside them, one noble, with a remarkably long waist, was expounding certain audacious opinions to another noble who was timidly staring at his forehead. Along the wall sat the mammas in gay-hued caps; around the doors pressed the men of simple cut, young fellows with perturbed faces, and elderly fellows with peaceable ones; but one cannot describe everything. We repeat: everything was as it should be.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna had arrived even earlier than the Ipátovs; Vladímir Sergyéitch saw her dancing with a young man of handsome appearance in a dandified dress-suit, with expressive eyes, thin black moustache, and gleaming teeth; a gold chain hung in a semicircle on his stomach. Nadézhda Alexyéevna wore a light-blue gown with white flowers; a small garland of the same flowers encircled her curly head; she was smiling, fluttering her fan, and gaily gazing about her; she felt that she was the queen of the ball. Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her, made his obeisance, and looking her pleasantly in the face, he asked her whether she remembered her promise of the day before.

“What promise?”

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“Why, that you would dance the mazurka with me.”

“Yes, of course I will dance it with you.”

The young man who stood alongside Nadézhda Alexyéevna suddenly flushed crimson.

“You have probably forgotten, mademoiselle,”—he began,—“that you had already previously promised to-day’s mazurka to me.”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna became confused.

“Akh! good heavens, what am I to do?”—she said:—“excuse me, pray, M’sieu Steltchínsky, I am so absent-minded; I really am ashamed. . . .”

M’sieu Steltchínsky made no reply, and merely dropped his eyes; Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a slight air of dignity.

“Be so good, M’sieu Steltchínsky,”—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna; “you and I are old acquaintances, but M’sieu Astákhoff is a stranger among us; do not place me in an awkward position: permit me to dance with him.”

“As you please,”—returned the young man.—“But you must begin.”

“Thanks,”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, and fluttered off to meet her vis-à-vis.

Steltchínsky followed her with his eyes, then looked at Vladímir Sergyéitch. Vladímir Sergyéitch, in his turn, looked at him, then stepped aside.

The quadrille soon came to an end. Vladímir Sergyéitch strolled about the hall a little, then

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he betook himself to the drawing-room and paused at one of the card-tables. Suddenly he felt some one touch his hand from behind; he turned round—before him stood Steltchínsky.

“I must have a couple of words with you in the next room, if you will permit,”—said the latter, in French, very courteously, and with an accent which was not Russian.

Vladímir Sergyéitch followed him.

Steltchínsky halted at a window.

“In the presence of ladies,”—he began, in the same language as before,—“I could not say anything else than what I did say; but I hope you do not think that I really intend to surrender to you my right to the mazurka with M-lle Véretyeff.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch was astounded.

“Why so?”—he asked.

“Because, sir,”—replied Steltchínsky, quietly, laying his hand on his breast and inflating his nostrils,—“I don’t intend to,—that ’s all.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch also laid his hand on his breast, but did not inflate his nostrils.

“Permit me to remark to you, my dear sir,”—he began,—“that by this course you may drag M-lle Véretyeff into unpleasantness, and I assume”

“That would be extremely unpleasant to me, but no one can prevent your declining, declaring that you are ill, or going away. . . .”

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“ I shall not do it. For whom do you take me? ”

“ In that case, I shall be compelled to demand satisfaction from you.”

“ In what sense do you mean satisfaction? ”

“ The sense is evident.”

“ You will challenge me to a duel? ”

“ Precisely so, sir, if you do not renounce the mazurka.”

Steltchínsky endeavoured to utter these words as negligently as possible. Vladímír Sergyéitch's heart set to beating violently. He looked his wholly unexpected antagonist in the face. “ Phew, O Lord, what stupidity! ” he thought.

“ You are not jesting? ”—he articulated aloud.

“ I am not in the habit of jesting in general,”—replied Steltchínsky, pompously;—“ and particularly with people whom I do not know. You will not renounce the mazurka? ”—he added, after a brief pause.

“ I will not,”—retorted Vladímír Sergyéitch, as though deliberating.

“ Very good! We will fight to-morrow.”

“ Very well.”

“ To-morrow morning my second will call upon you.”

And with a courteous inclination, Steltchínsky withdrew, evidently well pleased with himself.

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Vladímir Sergyéitch remained a few minutes longer by the window.

“Just look at that, now!”—he thought.—“This is the result of thy new acquaintances! What possessed me to come? Good! Splendid!”

But at last he recovered himself, and went out into the hall.

In the hall they were already dancing the polka. Before Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes Márya Pávlovna flitted past with Piótr Alexyéitch, whom he had not noticed up to that moment; she seemed pale, and even sad; then Nadézhda Alexyéevna darted past, all beaming and joyous, with some youthful, bow-legged, but fiery artillery officer; on the second round, she was dancing with Steltchínsky. Steltchínsky shook his hair violently when he danced.

“Well, my dear fellow,”—suddenly rang out Ipátóff's voice behind Vladímir Sergyéitch's back;—“you 're only looking on, but not dancing yourself? Come, confess that, in spite of the fact that we live in a dead-calm region, so to speak, we are n't badly off, are we, hey?”

“Good! damn the dead-calm region!” thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and mumbling something in reply to Ipátóff, he went off to another corner of the hall.

“I must hunt up a second,”—he pursued his meditations;—“but where the devil am I to find one? I can't take Véretyeff; I know no others;

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the devil only knows what a stupid affair this is!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch, when he got angry, was fond of mentioning the devil.

At this moment, Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes fell upon The Folding Soul, Iván Ílitch, standing idly by the window.

"Would n't he do?"—he thought, and shrugging his shoulders, he added almost aloud:—"I shall have to take him."

Vladímir Sergyéitch stepped up to him.

"A very strange thing has just happened to me,"—began our hero with a forced smile:—"just imagine some young man or other, a stranger to me, has challenged me to a duel; it is utterly impossible for me to refuse; I am in indispensable need of a second: will not you act?"

Although Iván Ílitch was characterised, as we know, by imperturbable indifference, yet such an unexpected proposition startled even him. Thoroughly perplexed, he riveted his eyes on Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes,"—repeated Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"I should be greatly indebted to you. I am not acquainted with any one here. You alone"

"I can't,"—said Iván Ílitch, as though just waking up;—"I absolutely can't."

"Why not? You are afraid of unpleasantness; but all this will, I hope, remain a secret. . . ."

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As he spoke these words, Vladímir Sergyéitch felt himself blushing and growing confused.

“Excuse me, I can’t possibly,”—repeated Iván Ílitch, shaking his head and drawing back, in which operation he again overturned a chair.

For the first time in his life it was his lot to reply to a request by a refusal; but then, the request was such a queer one!

“At any rate,”—pursued Vladímir Sergyéitch, in an agitated voice, as he grasped his hand, —“do me the favour not to speak to any one concerning what I have said to you. I earnestly entreat this of you.”

“I can do that, I can do that,”—hastily replied Iván Ílitch;—“but the other thing I cannot do, say what you will; I positively am unable to do it.”

“Well, very good, very good,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—“but do not forget that I rely on your discretion. . . . I shall announce tomorrow to that gentleman,” he muttered to himself with vexation,—“that I could not find a second, so let him make what arrangements he sees fit, for I am a stranger here. And the devil prompted me to apply to that gentleman! But what else was there for me to do?”

Vladímir Sergyéitch was very, very unlike his usual self.

In the meantime, the ball went on. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have greatly liked to de-

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part at once, but departure was not to be thought of until the end of the mazurka. How was he to give up to his delighted antagonist? Unhappily for Vladímir Sergyéitch, the dances were in charge of a free-and-easy young gentleman with long hair and a sunken chest, over which, in semblance of a miniature waterfall, meandered a black satin neckcloth, transfixed with a huge gold pin. This young gentleman had the reputation, throughout the entire government, of being a man who had assimilated, in their most delicate details, all the customs and rules of the highest society, although he had lived in Petersburg only six months altogether, and had not succeeded in penetrating any loftier heights than the houses of Collegiate Assessor Sandaráki and his brother-in-law, State Councillor Kostandaráki. He superintended the dances at all balls, gave the signal to the musicians by clapping his hands, and in the midst of the roar of the trumpets and the squeaking of the violins shouted: “*En avant deux!*” or “*Grande chaîne!*” or “*A vous, mademoiselle!*” and was incessantly flying, all pale and perspiring, through the hall, slipping headlong, and bowing and scraping. He never began the mazurka before midnight. “And that is a concession,”—he was wont to say;—“in Petersburg I would keep you in torment until two o’clock.”

This ball seemed very long to Vladímir Ser-

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gyéitch. He prowled about like a shadow from hall to drawing-room, now and again exchanging cold glances with his antagonist, who never missed a single dance, and undertook to invite Márya Pávlovna for a quadrille, but she was already engaged—and a couple of times he banded words with the anxious host, who appeared to be harassed by the tedium which was written on the countenance of the new guest. At last, the music of the longed-for mazurka thundered out. Vladímír Sergyéitch hunted up his lady, brought two chairs, and seated himself with her, near the end of the circle, almost opposite Stel-tchínsky.

The young man who managed affairs was in the first pair, as might have been expected. With what a face he began the mazurka, how he dragged his lady after him, how he beat the floor with his foot, and twitched his head the while,—all this is almost beyond the power of human pen to describe.

“But it seems to me, M’sieu Astákhoff, that you are bored,”—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, suddenly turning to Vladímír Sergyéitch.

“I? Not in the least. What makes you think so?”

“Why, because I do from the expression of your face. . . . You have never smiled a single time since you arrived. I had not expected that of you. It is not becoming to you positive gen-

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tlemen to be misanthropical and to frown à la Byron. Leave that to the authors."

"I notice, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, that you frequently call me a positive man, as though mockingly. It must be that you regard me as the coldest and most sensible of beings, incapable of anything which . . . But do you know, I will tell you something; a positive man is often very sad at heart, but he does not consider it necessary to display to others what is going on there inside of him; he prefers to hold his peace."

"What do you mean by that?"—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna, surveying him with a glance.

"Nothing, ma'am,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, with feigned indifference, ássuming an air of mystery.

"Really?"

"Really, nothing. . . . You shall know some day, later on."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna wanted to pursue her questions, but at that moment a young girl, the host's daughter, led up to her Steltchínsky and another cavalier in blue spectacles.

"Life or death?"—she asked in French.

"Life,"—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna;
"I don't want death just yet."

Steltchínsky bowed; she went off with him.¹

¹ The figures in the mazurka are like those in the cotillon (which is often danced the same evening), but the step is very animated and original.—TRANSLATOR.

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The cavalier in the blue glasses, who was called Death, started off with the host's daughter. Steltchínsky had invented the two designations.

"Tell me, please, who is that Mr. Steltchínsky?"—inquired Vladímír Sergyéitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as the latter returned to her place.

"He is attached to the Governor's service, and is a very agreeable man. He does not belong in these parts. He is somewhat of a coxcomb, but that runs in the blood of all of them. I hope you have not had any explanations with him on account of the mazurka?"

"None whatever, I assure you,"—replied Vladímír Sergyéitch, with a little hesitation.

"I 'm such a forgetful creature! You can't imagine!"

"I am bound to be delighted with your forgetfulness: it has afforded me the pleasure of dancing with you to-night."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed at him, with her eyes slightly narrowed.

"Really? You find it agreeable to dance with me?"

Vladímír Sergyéitch answered her with a compliment. Little by little he got to talking freely. Nadézhda Alexyéevna was always charming, and particularly so that evening; Vladímír Sergyéitch thought her enchanting. The thought of the duel on the morrow, while it fretted his nerves,

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imparted brilliancy and vivacity to his remarks; under its influence he permitted himself slight exaggerations in the expression of his feelings. . . . "I don't care!" he thought. Something mysterious, involuntarily sad, something elegantly-hopeless peeped forth in all his words, in his suppressed sighs, in his glances which suddenly darkened. At last, he got to chattering to such a degree that he began to discuss love, women, his future, the manner in which he conceived of happiness, what he demanded of Fate. . . . He explained himself allegorically, by hints. On the eve of his possible death, Vladímir Sergyéitch flirted with Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

She listened to him attentively, laughed, shook her head, now disputed with him, again pretended to be incredulous. . . . The conversation, frequently interrupted by the approach of ladies and cavaliers, took a rather strange turn toward the end. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch had already begun to interrogate Nadézhda Alexyéevna about herself, her character, her sympathies. At first she parried the questions with a jest, then, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly to Vladímir Sergyéitch, she asked him when he was going away.

"Whither?"—he said, in surprise.

"To your own home."

"To Sásovo?"

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“No, home, to your village, a hundred versts from here.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch cast down his eyes.

“I should like to go as promptly as possible,”—he said with a preoccupied look on his face.—“To-morrow, I think . . . if I am alive. For I have business on hand. But why have you suddenly taken it into your head to ask me about that?”

“Because I have!”—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

“But what is the reason?”

“Because I have!”—she repeated.—“I am surprised at the curiosity of a man who is going away to-morrow, and to-day wants to find out about my character. . . .”

“But, pardon me” began Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

“Ah, here, by the way read this,”—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him with a laugh, as she handed him a motto-slip of paper from bonbons which she had just taken from a small table that stood near by, as she rose to meet Márya Pávlovna, who had stopped in front of her with another lady.

Márya Pávlovna was dancing with Piótr Alexyéitch. Her face was covered with a flush, and was flaming, but not cheerful.

Vladímir Sergyéitch glanced at the slip of paper; thereon, in wretched French letters, was printed:

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“*Qui me néglige me perd.*”

He raised his eyes, and encountered Steltchín-sky's gaze bent upon him. Vladímír Sergyéitch smiled constrainedly, threw his elbow over the back of the chair, and crossed his legs—as much as to say: “I don't care for thee!”

The fiery artillery officer brought Nadézhda Alexyéevna up to her chair with a dash, pirouetted gently in front of her, bowed, clicked his spurs, and departed. She sat down.

“Allow me to inquire,”—began Vladímír Sergyéitch, with pauses between his words,—“in what sense I am to understand this billet? . . .”

“But what in the world does it say?”—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—“Ah, yes! ‘*Qui me néglige me perd.*’ Well! that 's an admirable rule of life, which may be of service at every step. In order to make a success of anything, no matter what, one must not neglect anything whatsoever. . . . One must endeavour to obtain everything; perhaps one will obtain something. But I am ridiculous. I . . . I am talking to you, a practical man, about rules of life. . . .”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst into a laugh, and Vladímír Sergyéitch strove, in vain, to the very end of the mazurka, to renew their previous conversation. Nadézhda Alexyéevna avoided it with the perversity of a capricious child. Vladímír Sergyéitch talked to her about his sentiments, and she either did not reply to him at all, or else she called his attention to the gowns of the ladies,

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to the ridiculous faces of some of the men, to the skill with which her brother danced, to the beauty of Márya Pávlovna; she began to talk about music, about the day before, about Egór Kapítontitch and his wife, Matryóna Márkovna . . . and only at the very close of the mazurka, when Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to make her his farewell bow, did she say, with an ironical smile on her lips and in her eyes:

“So you are positively going to-morrow?”

“Yes; and very far away, perhaps,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, significantly.

“I wish you a happy journey.”

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna swiftly approached her brother, merrily whispered something in his ear, then asked aloud:

“Grateful to me? Yes? art thou not? otherwise he would have asked *her* for the mazurka.”

He shrugged his shoulders, and said:

“Nevertheless, nothing will come of it. . . .”

She led him off into the drawing-room.

“The flirt!”—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and taking his hat in his hand, he slipped unnoticed from the hall, hunted up his footman, to whom he had previously given orders to hold himself in readiness, and was already donning his overcoat, when suddenly, to his intense surprise, the lackey informed him that it was impossible to depart, as the coachman, in some unknown manner, had drunk to intoxication,

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and that it was utterly impossible to arouse him. After cursing the coachman in a remarkably brief but extremely powerful manner (this took place in the anteroom, outside witnesses were present), and informing his footman that if the coachman was not in proper condition by daylight to-morrow, then no one in the world would be capable of picturing to himself what the result would be, Vladímir Sergyéitch returned to the hall, and requested the major-domo to allot him a chamber, without waiting for supper, which was already prepared in the drawing-room. The master of the house suddenly popped up, as it were, out of the floor, at Vladímir Sergyéitch's very elbow (Gavríla Stepánitch wore boots without heels, and therefore moved about without the slightest sound), and began to hold him back, assuring him that there would be caviar of the very best quality for supper; but Vladímir Sergyéitch excused himself on the plea of a headache. Half an hour later he was lying in a small bed, under a short coverlet, and trying to get to sleep.

But he could not get to sleep. Toss as he would from side to side, strive as he would to think of something else, the figure of Steltchín-sky importunately towered up before him. . . . Now he is taking aim . . . now he has fired. . . . "Astákhoff is killed," says some one. Vladímir Sergyéitch could not be called a brave

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man, yet he was no coward; but even the thought of a duel, no matter with whom, had never once entered his head. . . . Fight! with his good sense, peaceable disposition, respect for the conventions, dreams of future prosperity, and an advantageous marriage! If it had not been a question of his own person, he would have laughed heartily, so stupid and ridiculous did this affair seem to him. Fight! with whom, and about what?!

“Phew! damn it! what nonsense!”—he exclaimed involuntarily aloud.—“Well, and what if he really does kill me?”—he continued his meditations;—“I must take measures, make arrangements. . . . Who will mourn for me?”

And in vexation he closed his eyes, which were staringly-wide open, drew the coverlet up around his neck . . . but could not get to sleep, nevertheless. . . .

Dawn was already breaking, and exhausted with the fever of insomnia, Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to fall into a doze, when suddenly he felt some weight or other on his feet. He opened his eyes. . . . On his bed sat Véretyeff.

Vladímir Sergyéitch was greatly amazed, especially when he noticed that Véretyeff had no coat on, that beneath his unbuttoned shirt his bare breast was visible, that his hair was tumbling over his forehead, and that his very face

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appeared changed. Vladímir Sergyéitch got half-way out of bed. . . .

“Allow me to ask” he began, throwing his hands apart. . . .

“I have come to you,”—said Véretyeff, in a hoarse voice;—“excuse me for coming in such a guise. . . . We have been drinking a bit yonder. I wanted to put you at ease. I said to myself: ‘Yonder lies a gentleman who, in all probability, cannot get to sleep.—Let ’s help him.’—Understand; you are not going to fight to-morrow, and can go to sleep.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch was still more amazed than before.

“What was that you said?”—he muttered.

“Yes; that has all been adjusted,”—went on Véretyeff;—“that gentleman from the banks of the Visla Steltchínsky makes his apologies to you to-morrow you will receive a letter. . . . I repeat to you:—all is settled. . . . Snore away.”

So saying, Véretyeff rose, and directed his course, with unsteady steps, toward the door.

“But permit me, permit me,”—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—“How could you have found out, and how can I believe”

“Akh! you think that I you know” (and he reeled forward slightly) “I tell you . . . he will send a letter to you to-morrow. You do not arouse any particular sym-

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pathy in me, but magnanimity is my weak side. But what 's the use of talking. . . . It 's all nonsense anyway. . . . But confess,"—he added, with a wink;—"you were pretty well scared, were n't you, hey?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch flew into a rage.

"Permit me, in conclusion, my dear sir,"—said he. . . .

"Well, good, good,"—Véretieff interrupted him with a good-natured smile.—"Don't fly into a passion. Evidently you are not aware that no ball ever takes place without that sort of thing. That 's the established rule. It never amounts to anything. Who feels like exposing his brow? Well, and why not bluster, hey? at newcomers, for instance? *In vino veritas*. However, neither you nor I know Latin. But I see by your face that you are sleepy. I wish you good night, Mr. Positive Man, well-intentioned mortal. Accept this wish from another mortal who is n't worth a brass farthing himself. *Addio, mio caro!*"

And Véretieff left the room.

"The devil knows what this means!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, banging his fist into the pillow;—"no one ever heard the like! . . . this must be cleared up! I won't tolerate this!"

Nevertheless, five minutes later he was already sleeping softly and profoundly. . . . Danger

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escaped fills the soul of man with sweetness, and softens it.

This is what had taken place before that unanticipated nocturnal interview between Véretyeff and Vladímir Sergyéitch.

In Gavríla Stepánitch's house lived his grand-nephew, who occupied bachelor quarters in the lower story. When there were balls on hand, the young men dropped in at his rooms between the dances, to smoke a hasty pipe, and after supper they assembled there for a friendly drinking-bout. A good many of the guests had dropped in on him that night. Steltchínsky and Véretyeff were among the number; Iván Ílitch, The Folding Soul, also wandered in there in the wake of the others. They brewed a punch. Although Iván Ílitch had promised Astákhoff that he would not mention the impending duel to any one whomsoever, yet, when Véretyeff accidentally asked him what he had been talking about with that glum fellow (Véretyeff never alluded to Astákhoff otherwise), The Folding Soul could not contain himself, and repeated his entire conversation with Vladímir Sergyéitch, word for word.

Véretyeff burst out laughing, then lapsed into meditation.

“But with whom is he going to fight?”—he asked.

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“That ’s what I cannot say,”—returned Iván Ílitch.

“At all events, with whom has he been talking?”

“With different people. . . . With Egór Kapítonitch. It cannot be that he is going to fight with him?”

Véretyeff went away from Iván Ílitch.

So, then, they made a punch, and began to drink. Véretyeff was sitting in the most conspicuous place. Jolly and profligate, he held the pre-eminence in gatherings of young men. He threw off his waistcoat and neckcloth. He was asked to sing; he took a guitar and sang several songs. Heads began to wax rather hot; the young men began to propose toasts. Suddenly Steltchínsky, all red in the face, sprang upon the table, and elevating his glass high above his head, exclaimed loudly:

“To the health of I know whom,”—he hastily caught himself up, drank off his liquor, and smashed his glass on the floor, adding:—“May my foe be shivered into just such pieces to-morrow!”

Véretyeff, who had long had his eye on him, swiftly raised his head. . . .

“Steltchínsky,”—said he,—“in the first place, get off the table; that ’s indecorous, and you have very bad boots into the bargain; and, in the second place, come hither, I will tell thee something.”

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He led him aside.

“Hearken, brother; I know that thou art going to fight to-morrow with that gentleman from Petersburg.”

Steltchínsky started.

“How . . . who told thee?”

“I tell thee it is so. And I also know on whose account thou art going to fight.”

“Who is it? I am curious to know.”

“Akh, get out with thee, thou Talleyrand! My sister’s, of course. Come, come, don’t pretend to be surprised. It gives you a goose-like expression. I can’t imagine how this has come about, but it is a fact. That will do, my good fellow,”—pursued Véretyeff.—“What ’s the use of shamming? I know, you see, that you have been paying court to her this long time.”

“But, nevertheless, that does not prove”

“Stop, if you please. But hearken to what I am about to say to you. I won’t permit that duel under any circumstances whatsoever. Dost understand? All this folly will descend upon my sister. Excuse me: so long as I am alive that shall not be. As for thou and I, we shall perish—we ’re on the road to it; but she must live a long time yet, and live happily. Yes, I swear,”—he added, with sudden heat,—“that I will betray all others, even those who might be ready to sacrifice everything for me, but I will

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not permit any one to touch a single hair of her head."

Stelchínsky emitted a forced laugh.

"Thou art drunk, my dear fellow, and art raving . . . that 's all."

"And art not thou, I 'd like to know? But whether I am drunk or not, is a matter of not the slightest consequence. But I 'm talking business. Thou shalt not fight with that gentleman, I guarantee that. And what in the world possessed thee to have anything to do with him? Hast grown jealous, pray? Well, those speak the truth who say that men in love are stupid! Why she danced with him simply in order to prevent his inviting . . . Well, but that 's not the point. But this duel shall not take place."

"H'm! I should like to see how thou wilt prevent me?"

"Well, then, this way: if thou dost not instantly give me thy word to renounce this duel, I will fight with thee myself."

"Really?"

"My dear fellow, entertain no doubt on that score. I will insult thee on the spot, my little friend, in the presence of every one, in the most fantastic manner, and then fight thee across a handkerchief, if thou wilt. But I think that will be disagreeable to thee, for many reasons, hey?"

Stelchínsky flared up, began to say that this

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was *intimidation*,¹ that he would not permit any one to meddle with his affairs, that he would not stick at anything . . . and wound up by submitting, and renouncing all attempts on the life of Vladímir Sergyéitch. Véretyeff embraced him, and half an hour had not elapsed, before the two had already drunk Brüderschaft for the tenth time,—that is to say, they drank with arms interlocked. . . . The young man who had acted as floor-manager of the ball also drank Brüderschaft with them, and at first clung close to them, but finally fell asleep in the most innocent manner, and lay for a long time on his back in a condition of complete insensibility. . . . The expression of his tiny, pale face was both amusing and pitiful. . . . Good heavens! what would those fashionable ladies, his acquaintances, have said, if they had beheld him in that condition! But, luckily for him, he was not acquainted with a single fashionable lady.

Iván Ílitch also distinguished himself on that night. First he amazed the guests by suddenly striking up: “In the country a Baron once dwelt.”

“The hawfinch! The hawfinch has begun to sing!”—shouted all. “When has it ever happened that a hawfinch has sung by night?”

“As though I knew only one song,”—retorted

¹ He uses an impromptu Russification of a foreign word: *intimidtziya*.—TRANSLATOR.

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Iván Ílitch, who was heated with liquor;—"I know some more, too."

"Come, come, come, show us your art."

Iván Ílitch maintained silence for a while, and suddenly struck up in a bass voice: "Krambambuli,¹ bequest of our fathers!" but so incoherently and strangely, that a general outburst of laughter immediately drowned his voice, and he fell silent. When all had dispersed, Véretyeff betook himself to Vladímír Sergyéitch, and the brief conversation already reported, ensued between them.

On the following day, Vladímír Sergyéitch drove off to his own Sásovo very early. He passed the whole morning in a state of excitement, came near mistaking a passing merchant for a second, and breathed freely only when his lackey brought him a letter from Steltchínsky. Vladímír Sergyéitch perused that letter several times,—it was very adroitly worded. . . . Steltchínsky began with the words: "*La nuit porte conseil, Monsieur,*"—made no excuses whatever, because, in his opinion, he had not insulted his antagonist in any way; but admitted that he had been somewhat irritated on the preceding evening, and wound up with the statement that he held himself entirely at the disposition of Mr. Astákhoff ("*de M-r Astákhoff*"), but no longer demanded satisfaction himself. After having

¹ A mixed drink.—TRANSLATOR.

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composed and despatched a reply, which was filled, simultaneously with courtesy which bordered on playfulness, and a sense of dignity, in which, however, no trace of braggadocio was perceptible, Vladímir Sergyéitch sat down to dinner, rubbing his hands, ate with great satisfaction, and immediately afterward set off, without having even sent relays on in advance. The road along which he drove passed at a distance of four versts from Ipátov's manor. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch looked at it.

"Farewell, region of dead calm!"—he said with a smile.

The images of Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Márya Pávlovna presented themselves for a moment to his imagination; he dismissed them with a wave of his hand, and sank into a doze.

VI

MORE than three months had passed. Autumn had long since set in; the yellow forests had grown bare, the tomtits had arrived, and—unfailing sign of the near approach of winter—the wind had begun to howl and wail. But there had been no heavy rains, as yet, and mud had not succeeded in spreading itself over the roads. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Vladímir Sergyéitch set out for the government capital,

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for the purpose of winding up several matters of business. He spent the morning in driving about, and in the evening went to the club. In the vast, gloomy hall of the club he encountered several acquaintances, and, among others, the old retired captain of cavalry Flitch, a busybody, wit, gambler, and gossip, well known to every one. Vladímir Sergyéitch entered into conversation with him.

“ Ah, by the way! ”—suddenly exclaimed the retired cavalry-captain; “ an acquaintance of yours passed through here the other day, and left her compliments for you.”

“ Who was she? ”

“ Madame Steltchínsky.”

“ I don't know any Madame Steltchínsky.”

“ You knew her as a girl. . . . She was born Véretyeff. . . . Nadézhda Alexyéevna. Her husband served our Governor. You must have seen him also. . . . A lively man, with a moustache. . . . He's hooked a splendid woman, with money to boot.”

“ You don't say so,”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.—“ So she has married him. . . . H'm! And where have they gone? ”

“ To Petersburg. She also bade me remind you of a certain bonbon motto. . . . What sort of a motto was it, allow me to inquire? ”

And the old gossip thrust forward his sharp nose.

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“ I don’t remember, really; some jest or other,” —returned Vladímir Sergyéitch. —“ But permit me to ask, where is her brother now? ”

“ Piótr? Well, he ’s in a bad way.”

Mr. Flitch rolled up his small, foxy eyes, and heaved a sigh.

“ Why, what ’s the matter? ” —asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“ He has taken to dissipation! He ’s a ruined man.”

“ But where is he now? ”

“ It is absolutely unknown where he is. He went off somewhere or other after a gipsy girl; that ’s the most certain thing of all. He ’s not in this government, I ’ll guarantee that.”

“ And does old Ipátóff still live there? ”

“ Mikhaíl Nikoláitch? That eccentric old fellow? Yes, he still lives there.”

“ And is everything in his household as it used to be? ”

“ Certainly, certainly. Here now, why don’t you marry his sister-in-law? She ’s not a woman, you know, she ’s simply a monument, really. Ha, ha! People have already been talking among us ‘ why,’ say they ”

“ You don’t say so, sir,” —articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, narrowing his eyes.

At that moment, Flitch was invited to a card-game, and the conversation terminated.

Vladímir Sergyéitch had intended to return

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home promptly; but suddenly he received by special messenger a report from the overseer, that six of the peasants' homesteads had burned down in Sásovo, and he decided to go thither himself. The distance from the government capital to Sásovo was reckoned at sixty versts. Vladímir Sergyéitch arrived toward evening at the wing with which the reader is already acquainted, immediately gave orders that the overseer and clerk should be summoned, scolded them both in proper fashion, inspected the scene of the conflagration next morning, took the necessary measures, and after dinner, after some wavering, set off to visit Ipátóff. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have remained at home, had he not heard from Flitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna's departure; he did not wish to meet her; but he was not averse to taking another look at Márya Pávlovna.

Vladímir Sergyéitch, as on the occasion of his first visit, found Ipátóff busy at draughts with The Folding Soul. The old man was delighted to see him; yet it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though his face were troubled, and his speech did not flow freely and readily as of old.

Vladímir Sergyéitch exchanged a silent glance with Iván Ílitch. Both winced a little; but they speedily recovered their serenity.

"Are all your family well?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes, thank God, I thank you sincerely,"—

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replied Ipátóff.—“ Only Márya Pávlovna is n't quite . . . you know, she stays in her room most of the time.”

“ Has she caught cold? ”

“ No . . . she just likes to. She will make her appearance at tea.”

“ And Egór Kapítónitch? What is he doing? ”

“ Akh! Egór Kapítónitch is a dead man. His wife has died.”

“ It cannot be! ”

“ She died in twenty-four hours, of cholera. You would n't know him now, he has become simply unrecognisable. ‘ Without Matryóna Márkovna,’ he says, ‘ life is a burden to me. I shall die,’ he says, ‘ and God be thánked,’ he says; ‘ I don't wish to live,’ says he. Yes, he 's done for, poor fellow.”

“ Akh! good heavens, how unpleasant that is! ”
—exclaimed Vladímír Sergyéitch.—“ Poor Egór Kapítónitch! ”

All were silent for a time.

“ I hear that your pretty neighbour has married,”—remarked Vladímír Sergyéitch, flushing faintly.

“ Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Yes, she has.”

Ipátóff darted a sidelong glance at Vladímír Sergyéitch.

“ Certainly certainly, she has married and gone away.”

“ To Petersburg? ”

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“To St. Petersburg.”

“Márya Pávlovna must miss her, I think. I believe they were great friends.”

“Of course she misses her. That cannot be avoided. But as for friendship, I ’ll just tell you, that the friendship of girls is even worse than the friendship of men. So long as they are face to face, it ’s all right; but, otherwise, it vanishes.”

“Do you think so?”

“Yes, by Heaven, ’t is so! Take Nadézhda Alexyéevna, for example. She has n’t written to us since she went away; but how she promised, even vowed that she would! In truth, she ’s in no mood for that now.”

“And has she been gone long?”

“Yes; it must be fully six weeks. She hurried off on the very day after the wedding, foreign fashion.”

“I hear that her brother is no longer here, either?”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause.

“No; he is not. They are city folk, you see; as though they would live long in the country!”

“And does no one know where he has gone?”

“No.”

“He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear,” remarked Iván Ílitch.

“He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear,” repeated Ipátóff. “Well, and how about

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yourself, Vladímir Sergyéitch,—what nice things have you been doing?”—he added, wheeling round on his chair.

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to tell about himself; Ipátóff listened and listened to him, and at last exclaimed:

“But why does n’t Márya Pávlovna come? Thou hadst better go for her, Iván Ílitch.”

Iván Ílitch left the room, and returning, reported that Márya Pávlovna would be there directly.

“What ’s the matter? Has she got a headache?”—inquired Ipátóff, in an undertone.

“Yes,” replied Iván Ílitch.

The door opened, and Márya Pávlovna entered. Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, bowed, and could not utter a word, so great was his amazement: so changed was Márya Pávlovna since he had seen her the last time! The rosy bloom had vanished from her emaciated cheeks; a broad black ring encircled her eyes; her lips were bitterly compressed; her whole face, impassive and dark, seemed to have become petrified.

She raised her eyes, and there was no spark in them.

“How do you feel now?” Ipátóff asked her.

“I am well,”—she replied; and sat down at the table, on which the samovár was already bubbling.

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Vladímir Sergyéitch was pretty thoroughly bored that evening. But no one was in good spirits. The conversation persisted in taking a cheerless turn.

"Just listen,"—said Ipátóff, among other things, as he lent an ear to the howling of the wind;—"what notes it emits! The summer is long since past; and here is autumn passing, too, and winter is at the door. Again we shall be buried in snow-drifts. I hope the snow will fall very soon. Otherwise, when you go out into the garden, melancholy descends upon you. . . . Just as though there were some sort of a ruin there. The branches of the trees clash together. . . . Yes, the fine days are over!"

"They are over,"—repeated Iván Ílitch.

Márya Pávlovna stared silently out of the window.

"God willing, they will return,"—remarked Ipátóff.

No one answered him.

"Do you remember how finely they sang songs here that time?"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I should think they did,"—replied the old man, with a sigh.

"But you might sing to us,"—went on Vladímir Sergyéitch, turning to Márya Pávlovna;—"you have such a fine voice."

She did not answer him.

"And how is your mother?"—Vladímir Ser-

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gyéitch inquired of Ipátóff, not knowing what to talk about.

“Thank God! she gets on nicely, considering her ailments. She came over in her little carriage to-day. She ’s a broken tree, I must tell you—creak, creak, and the first you know, some young, strong sapling falls over; but she goes on standing and standing. Ekh, ha, ha!”

Márya Pávlovna dropped her hands in her lap, and bowed her head.

“And, nevertheless, her existence is hard,”—began Ipátóff again;—“rightly is it said: ‘old age is no joy.’”

“And there ’s no joy in being young,”—said Márya Pávlovna, as though to herself.

Vladímir Sergyéitch would have liked to return home that night, but it was so dark out of doors that he could not make up his mind to set out. He was assigned to the same chamber, up-stairs, in which, three months previously, he had passed a troubled night, thanks to Egór Kapítonitch. . . .

“Does he snore now?”—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he recalled his drilling of his servant, and the sudden appearance of Márya Pávlovna in the garden. . . .

Vladímir Sergyéitch walked to the window, and laid his brow against the cold glass. His own face gazed dimly at him from out of doors, as though his eyes were riveted upon a black cur-

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tain, and it was only after a considerable time that he was able to make out against the starless sky the branches of the trees, writhing wildly in the gloom. They were harassed by a turbulent wind.

Suddenly it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though something white had flashed along the ground. . . . He gazed more intently, laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and exclaiming in an undertone: "That 's what imagination will do!" got into bed.

He fell asleep very soon; but he was not fated to pass a quiet night on this occasion either. He was awakened by a running to and fro, which arose in the house. . . . He raised his head from the pillow. . . . Agitated voices, exclamations, hurried footsteps were audible, doors were banging; now the sound of women weeping rang out, shouts were set up in the garden, other cries farther off responded. . . . The uproar in the house increased, and became more noisy with every moment. . . . "Fire!" flashed through Vladímir Sergyéitch's mind. In alarm he sprang from his bed, and rushed to the window; but there was no redness in the sky; only, in the garden, points of flame were moving briskly along the paths,—caused by people running about with lanterns. Vladímir Sergyéitch went quickly to the door, opened it, and ran directly into Iván Ílitch. Pale, dishevelled, half-clothed, the lat-

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ter was dashing onward, without himself knowing whither.

“What is it? What has happened?”—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch, excitedly, seizing him by the arm.

“She has disappeared; she has thrown herself into the water,”—replied Iván Ílitch, in a choking voice.

“Who has thrown herself into the water? Who has disappeared?”

“Márya Pávlovna! Who else could it be but Márya Pávlovna? She has perished, the darling! Help! Good heavens, let us run as fast as we can! Be quick, my dear people!”

And Iván Ílitch rushed down the stairs.

Vladímir Sergyéitch put on his shoes somehow, threw his cloak over his shoulders, and ran after him.

In the house he no longer encountered any one, all had hastened out into the garden; only the little girls, Ipátóff’s daughters, met him in the corridor, near the anteroom; deadly pale with terror, they stood there in their little white petticoats, with clasped hands and bare feet, beside a night-lamp set on the floor. Through the drawing-room, past an overturned table, flew Vladímir Sergyéitch to the terrace. Through the grove, in the direction of the dam, light and shadows were flashing. . . .

“Go for boat-hooks! Go for boat-hooks as

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quickly as possible!"—Ipátóff's voice could be heard shouting.

"A net, a net, a boat!"—shouted other voices.

Vladímir Sergyéitch ran in the direction of the shouts. He found Ipátóff on the shore of the pond; a lantern hung on a bough brilliantly illuminated the old man's grey head. He was wringing his hands, and reeling like a drunken man; by his side, a woman lay writhing and sobbing on the grass; round about men were bustling. Iván Ílitch had already advanced into the water up to his knees, and was feeling the bottom with a pole; a coachman was undressing, trembling all over as he did so; two men were dragging a boat along the shore; a sharp trampling of hoofs was audible along the village street. . . . The wind swept past with a shriek, as though endeavouring to quench the lantern, while the pond plashed noisily, darkling in a menacing way. . . .

"What do I hear?"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, rushing up to Ipátóff.—"Is it possible?"

"The boat-hooks—fetch the boat-hooks!"—moaned the old man by way of reply to him. . . .

"But good gracious, perhaps you are mistaken, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch. . . ."

"No, mistaken indeed!"—said the woman who was lying on the grass, Márya Pávlovna's maid, in a tearful voice. "Unlucky creature that I am, I heard her myself, the darling, throw herself into the water, and struggling in the water,

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and screaming: 'Save me!' and then, once more: 'Save me!'"

"Why did n't you prevent her, pray?"

"But how was I to prevent her, dear little father, my lord? Why, when I discovered it, she was no longer in her room, but my heart had a foreboding, you know; these last days she has been so sad all the time, and has said nothing; so I knew how it was, and rushed straight into the garden, just as though some one had made me do it; and suddenly I heard something go splash! into the water: 'Save me!' I heard the cry: 'Save me!' Okh, my darling, light of my eyes!"

"But perhaps it only seemed so to thee!"

"Seemed so, forsooth! But where is she? what has become of her?"

"So that is what looked white to me in the gloom," thought Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

In the meanwhile, men had run up with boat-hooks, dragged thither a net, and begun to spread it out on the grass, a great throng of people had assembled, a commotion had arisen, and a jostling the coachman seized one boat-hook, the village elder seized another, both sprang into the boat, put off, and set to searching the water with the hooks; the people on the shore lighted them. Strange and dreadful did their movements seem, and their shadows in the gloom, above the agitated pond, in the dim and uncertain light of the lanterns.

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“He . . . here, the hook has caught!”—suddenly cried the coachman.

All stood stock-still where they were.

The coachman pulled the hook toward him, and bent over. . . . Something horned and black slowly came to the surface. . . .

“A tree-stump,”—said the coachman, pulling away the hook.

“But come back, come back!”—they shouted to him from the shore.—“Thou wilt accomplish nothing with the hooks; thou must use the net.”

“Yes, yes, the net!”—chimed in others.

“Stop,”—said the elder;—“I’ve got hold of something also . . . something soft, apparently,”—he added, after a brief pause.

A white spot made its appearance alongside the boat. . . .

“The young lady!”—suddenly shouted the elder.—“’T is she!”

He was not mistaken. . . . The hook had caught Márya Pávlovna by the sleeve of her gown. The coachman immediately seized her, dragged her out of the water . . . in a couple of powerful strokes the boat was at the shore. . . . Ipátovf, Iván Ílitch, Vladímir Sergyéitch, all rushed to Márya Pávlovna, raised her up, bore her home in their arms, immediately undressed her, and began to roll her, and warm her. . . . But all their efforts, their exertions,

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proved vain. . . . Márya Pávlovna did not come to herself. . . . Life had already left her.

Early on the following morning, Vladímír Sergyéitch left Ipátovka; before his departure, he went to bid farewell to the dead woman. She was lying on the table in the drawing-room in a white gown. . . . Her thick hair was not yet entirely dry, a sort of mournful surprise was expressed on her pale face, which had not had time to grow distorted; her parted lips seemed to be trying to speak, and ask something; . . . her hands, convulsively clasped, as though with grief, were pressed tight to her breast. . . . But with whatever sorrowful thought the poor drowned girl had perished, death had laid upon her 'the seal of its eternal silence and peace and who understands what a dead face expresses during those few moments when, for the last time, it meets the glance of the living before it vanishes forever and is destroyed in the grave?

Vladímír Sergyéitch stood for a while in decorous meditation before the body of Márya Pávlovna, crossed himself thrice, and left the room, without having noticed Iván Ílitch who was weeping softly in one corner. . . . And he was not the only one who wept that day: all the servants in the house wept bitterly: Márya Pávlovna had left a good memory behind her.

The following is what old Ipátovff wrote, a

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week later, in reply to a letter which had come, at last, from Nadézhda Alexyéevna:

“One week ago, dear Madam, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, my unhappy sister-in-law, your acquaintance, Márya Pávlovna, wilfully ended her own life, by throwing herself by night into the pond, and we have already committed her body to the earth. She decided upon this sad and terrible deed, without having bidden me farewell, without leaving even a letter or so much as a note, to declare her last will. . . . But you know better than any one else, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, on whose soul this great and deadly sin must fall! May the Lord God judge your brother, for my sister-in-law could not cease to love him, nor survive the separation. . . .”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna received this letter in Italy, whither she had gone with her husband, Count de Steltchínsky, as he was called in all the hotels. He did not visit hotels alone, however; he was frequently seen in gambling-houses, in the Kur-Saal at the baths. . . . At first he lost a great deal of money, then he ceased to lose, and his face assumed a peculiar expression, not precisely suspicious, nor yet precisely insolent, like that which a man has who unexpectedly gets involved in scandals. . . . He saw his wife rarely. But Nadézhda Alexyéevna did not languish in his absence. She developed a passion for painting and the fine arts. She associated chiefly with artists, and was fond of discussing the beautiful

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with young men. Ipátóff's letter grieved her greatly, but did not prevent her going that same day to "the Dogs' Cave," to see how the poor animals suffocated when immersed in sulphur fumes.

She did not go alone. She was escorted by divers cavaliers. Among their number, a certain Mr. Popelin, an artist—a Frenchman, who had not finished his course—with a small beard, and dressed in a checked sack-coat, was the most agreeable. He sang the newest romances in a thin tenor voice, made very free-and-easy jokes, and although he was gaunt of form, yet he ate a very great deal.

VII

It was a sunny, cold January day; a multitude of people were strolling on the Névsy Prospekt. The clock on the tower of the city hall marked three o'clock. Along the broad stone slabs, strewn with yellow sand, was walking, among others, our acquaintance Vladímir Ser-gyéitch Astákhoff. He has grown very virile since we parted from him; his face is framed in whiskers, and he has grown plump all over, but he has not aged. He was moving after the crowd at a leisurely pace, and now and then casting a glance about him; he was expecting his

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wife; she had preferred to drive up in the carriage with her mother. Vladímir Sergyéitch married five years ago, precisely in the manner which he had always desired: his wife was wealthy, and with the best of connections. Courteously lifting his splendidly brushed hat when he met his numerous acquaintances, Vladímir Sergyéitch was still stepping out with the free stride of a man who is satisfied with his lot, when suddenly, just at the Passage,¹ he came near colliding with a gentleman in a Spanish cloak and foraging-cap, with a decidedly worn face, a dyed moustache, and large, swollen eyes. Vladímir Sergyéitch drew aside with dignity, but the gentleman in the foraging-cap glanced at him, and suddenly exclaimed:

“ Ah! Mr. Astákhoff, how do you do? ”

Vladímir Sergyéitch made no reply, and stopped short in surprise. He could not comprehend how a gentleman who could bring himself to walk on the Névsky in a foraging-cap could be acquainted with his name.

“ You do not recognise me, ”—pursued the gentleman in the cap:—“ I saw you eight years ago, in the country, in the T*** Government, at the Ipátovs’. My name is Véretyeff.”

“ Akh! Good heavens! excuse me! ”—ex-

¹A large collection of shops, under one roof, extending from the Névsky Prospekt to the Bolshaya Italyánskaya (“Great Italian Street”), in St. Petersburg.—TRANSLATOR.

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claimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.—“But how you have changed since then! . . .”

“Yes, I have grown old,”—returned Piótr Alexyéitch, passing his hand, which was devoid of a glove, over his face.—“But you have not changed.”

Véretyeff had not so much aged as fallen away and sunk down. Small, delicate wrinkles covered his face; and when he spoke, his lips and cheeks twitched slightly. From all this it was perceptible that the man had been living hard.

“Where have you disappeared to all this time, that you have not been visible?”—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked him.

“I have been wandering about hère and there. And you have been in Petersburg all the while?”

“Yes, most of the time.”

“Are you married?”

“Yes.”

And Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a rather severe mien, as though with the object of saying to Véretyeff: “My good fellow, don’t take it into thy head to ask me to present thee to my wife.”

Véretyeff understood him, apparently. An indifferent sneer barely flitted across his lips.

“And how is your sister?”—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.—“Where is she?”

“I cannot tell you for certain. She must be in Moscow. I have not received any letters from her this long time!”

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“ Is her husband alive? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And Mr. Ipátov? ”

“ I don’t know; probably he is **alive** also; but he may be dead.”

“ And that gentleman—what the deuce was his name?—Bodryakóff,—what of him? ”

“ The one you invited to be your second—you remember, when you were so scared? Why, the devil knows! ”

Vladímir Sergyéitch maintained silence for a while, with dignity written on his face.

“ I always recall with pleasure those evenings,”—he went on,—“ when I had the opportunity ” (he had nearly said, “ the honour ”) “ of making the acquaintance of your sister and yourself. She was a very amiable person. And do you sing as agreeably as ever? ”

“ No; I have lost my voice. . . . But that was a good time! ”

“ I visited Ipátovka once afterward,”—added Vladímir Sergyéitch, elevating his eyebrows mournfully. “ I think that was the name of that village—on the very day of a terrible event. . . . ”

“ Yes, yes, that was frightful, frightful,”—Véretieff hastily interrupted him.—“ Yes, yes. And do you remember how you came near fighting with my present brother-in-law? ”

“ H’m! I remember! ”—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, slowly.—“ However, I must confess to

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you that so much time has elapsed since then, that all that sometimes seems to me like a dream. . . .”

“ Like a dream,”—repeated Véretyeff, and his pale cheeks flushed;—“ like a dream no, it was not a dream, for me at all events. It was the time of youth, of mirth and happiness, the time of unlimited hopes, and invincible powers; and if it was a dream, then it was a very beautiful dream. And now, you and I have grown old and stupid, we dye our moustaches, and saunter on the Névsy, and have become good for nothing; like broken-winded nags, we have become utterly vapid and worn out; it cannot be said that we are pompous and put on airs, nor that we spend our time in idleness; but I fear we drown our grief in drink,—that is more like a dream, and a hideous dream. Life has been lived, and lived in vain, clumsily, vulgarly—that’s what is bitter! That ’s what one would like to shake off like a dream, that ’s what one would like to recover one’s self from! And then everywhere, there is one frightful memory, one ghost. . . . But farewell!”

Véretyeff walked hastily away; but on coming opposite the door of one of the principal confectioners on the Névsy, he halted, entered, and after drinking a glass of orange vodka at the buffet, he wended his way through the billiard-room, all dark and dim with tobacco-smoke, to the rear room. There he found several acquaint-

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ances, his former comrades—Pétya Lazúrin, Kóstya Kovróvsky, and Prince Serdiukóff, and two other gentlemen who were called simply Vasiúk, and Filát. All of them were men no longer young, though unmarried; some of them had lost their hair, others were growing grey; their faces were covered with wrinkles, their chins had grown double; in a word, these gentlemen had all long since passed their prime, as the saying is. Yet all of them continued to regard Véretyeff as a remarkable man, destined to astonish the universe; and he was wiser than they only because he was very well aware of his utter and radical uselessness. And even outside of his circle, there were people who thought concerning him, that if he had not ruined himself, the deuce only knows what he would have made of himself. . . . These people were mistaken. Nothing ever comes of Véretyeffs.

Piótr Alexyéitch's friends welcomed him with the customary greetings. At first he dumb-founded them with his gloomy aspect and his splenetic speeches; but he speedily calmed down, cheered up, and affairs went on in their wonted rut.

But Vladímir Sergyéitch, as soon as Véretyeff left him, contracted his brows in a frown and straightened himself up. Piótr Alexyéitch's unexpected sally had astounded, even offended him extremely.

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“ ‘ We have grown stupid, we drink liquor, we dye our moustaches ’ *parlez pour vous, mon cher,* ”—he said at last, almost aloud, and emitting a couple of snorts caused by an access of involuntary indignation, he was preparing to continue his stroll.

“ Who was that talking with you? ”—rang out a loud and self-confident voice behind him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round and beheld one of his best friends, a certain Mr. Pompónsky. This Mr. Pompónsky, a man of lofty stature, and stout, occupied a decidedly important post, and never once, from his very earliest youth, had he doubted himself.

“ Why, a sort of eccentric, ”—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, linking his arm in Mr. Pompónsky’s.

“ Good gracious, Vladímir Sergyéitch, is it permissible for a respectable man to chat on the street with an individual who wears a foraging-cap on his head? ’T is indecent! I ’m amazed! Where could you have made acquaintance with such a person? ”

“ In the country. ”

“ In the country. . . . One does not bow to one’s country neighbours in town *ce n’est pas comme il faut.* A gentleman should always bear himself like a gentleman if he wishes that ”

“ Here is my wife, ”—Vladímir Sergyéitch hastily interrupted him.—“ Let us go to her. ”

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And the two gentlemen directed their steps to a low-hung, elegant carriage, from whose window there peered forth the pale, weary, and irritatingly-arrogant little face of a woman who was still young, but already faded.

Behind her another lady, also apparently in a bad humour,—her mother,—was visible. Vladímir Sergyéitch opened the door of the carriage, and offered his arm to his wife. Pompónsky gave his to the mother-in-law, and the two couples made their way along the Névsky Prospekt, accompanied by a short, black-haired footman in yellowish-grey gaiters, and with a big cockade on his hat.

IT IS ENOUGH

(1864)

IT IS ENOUGH

A FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF A DEAD ARTIST

I

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II

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III

“**I**T is enough,” I said to myself, while my feet, treading unwillingly the steep slope of the mountain, bore me downward toward the quiet river; “it is enough,” I repeated, as I inhaled the resinous scent of the pine grove, to which the chill of approaching evening had imparted a peculiar potency and pungency; “it is enough,” I said once more, as I seated myself on a mossy hillock directly on the brink of the river and gazed at its dark, unhurried waves, above which a thick growth of reeds lifted their pale-green stalks. . . .
“It is enough!—Have done with dreaming, with striving: ’t is high time to pull thyself together;

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't is high time to clutch thy head with both hands and bid thy heart be still. Give over pampering thyself with the sweet indulgence of indefinite but captivating sensations; give over running after every new form of beauty; give over seizing every tremor of its delicate and powerful pinions.—Everything is known, everything has been felt over and over again many times already. . . . I am weary.—What care I that at this very moment the dawn is suffusing the sky ever more and more broadly, like some inflamed, all-conquering passion! What care I that two paces from me, amid the tranquillity and the tenderness and the gleam of evening, in the dewy depths of a motionless bush, a nightingale has suddenly burst forth in such magical notes as though there had never been any nightingales in the world before it, and as though it were the first to chant the first song of the first love! All that has been, has been, I repeat; it has been recapitulated a thousand times—and when one remembers that all this will so continue for a whole eternity—as though to order, by law—one even grows vexed! Yes vexed!”

IV

EH, how I have suffered! Formerly such thoughts never entered my head—formerly, in those happy days when I myself was wont to

flame like the glow of dawn, and to sing like the nightingale.—I must confess that everything has grown obscure round about me, all life has withered. The light which gives to its colours both significance and power—that light which emanates from the heart of man—has become extinct within me. . . . No, it has not yet become extinct—but it is barely smouldering, without radiance and without warmth. I remember how one day, late at night, in Moscow, I stepped up to the grated window of an ancient church and leaned against the uneven glass. It was dark under the low arches; a forgotten shrine-lamp flickered with a red flame in front of an ancient holy picture, and only the lips of the holy face were visible, stern and suffering: mournful gloom closed in around and seemed to be preparing to crush with its dull weight the faint ray of unnecessary light. . . . And in my heart reign now the same sort of light and the same sort of gloom.

V

AND this I write to thee—to thee, my only and unforgettable friend; to thee, my dear companion,¹ whom I have left forever, but whom I shall never cease to love until my life ends. . . . Alas! thou knowest what it was that separated us. But I will not refer to that now. I have left thee . . .

¹ The Russian shows that a woman is addressed. — TRANSLATOR.

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but even here, in this remote nook, at this distance, in this exile, I am all permeated with thee, I am in thy power as of yore, as of yore I feel the sweet pressure of thy hands upon my bowed head!—Rising up for the last time, from the mute grave in which I now am lying, I run a mild, much-moved glance over all my past, over all our past. . . . There is no hope and no return, but neither is there any bitterness in me, or regret; and clearer than the heavenly azure, purer than the first snows on the mountain heights, are my beautiful memories. . . . They do not press upon me in throngs: they pass by in procession, like those muffled figures of the Athenian god-born ones, which—dost thou remember?—we admired so greatly on the ancient bas-reliefs of the Vatican. . . .

VI

I HAVE just alluded to the light which emanates from the human heart and illumines everything which surrounds it. . . . I want to talk with thee about that time when that gracious light burned in my heart.—Listen . . . but I imagine that thou art sitting in front of me, and gazing at me with thine affectionate but almost severely-attentive eyes. O eyes never to be forgotten! On whom, on what are they now fixed? Who is receiving into his soul thy glance—that glance

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which seems to flow from unfathomable depths, like those mysterious springs—like you both bright and dark—which well up at the very bottom of narrow valleys, beneath overhanging cliffs? Listen.

VII

It was at the end of March, just before the Feast of the Annunciation, shortly after I saw thee for the first time—and before I as yet suspected what thou wert destined to become to me, although I already bore thee, silently and secretly in my heart.—I was obliged to cross one of the largest rivers in Russia. The ice had not yet begun to move in it, but it seemed to have swollen up and turned dark; three days previously a thaw had set in. The snow was melting round about diligently but quietly; everywhere water was oozing out; in the light air a soundless breeze was roving. The same even, milky hue enveloped earth and sky: it was not a mist, but it was not light; not a single object stood out from the general opacity; everything seemed both near and indistinct. Leaving my kibítka far behind, I walked briskly over the river-ice, and with the exception of the beat of my own footsteps, I could hear nothing. I walked on, enveloped on all sides by the first stupor and breath of early spring and little by little augmenting with every step, with every

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movement in advance, there gradually rose up and grew within me a certain joyous incomprehensible agitation. . . . It drew me on, it hastened my pace—and so powerful were its transports, that I came to a standstill at last and looked about me in surprise and questioningly, as though desirous of detecting the outward cause of my ecstatic condition. . . . All was still, white, sunny; but I raised my eyes: high above flocks of migratory birds were flying past. . . . “Spring! Hail, Spring!”—I shouted in a loud voice. “Hail, life and love and happiness!”—And at that same instant, with sweetly-shattering force, similar to the flower of a cactus, there suddenly flared up within me thy image—flared up and stood there, enchantingly clear and beautiful—and I understood that I loved thee, thee alone, that I was all filled with thee. . . .

VIII

I THINK of thee . . . and many other memories, other pictures rise up before me,—and thou art everywhere, on all the paths of my life I encounter thee.—Now there presents itself to me an old Russian garden on the slope of a hill, illuminated by the last rays of the summer sun. From behind silvery poplars peeps forth the wooden roof of the manor-house, with a slender wreath of crimson smoke hanging above the white

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chimney, and in the fence a wicket-gate stands open a crack, as though some one had pulled it to with undecided hand. And I stand and wait, and gaze at that gate and at the sand on the garden paths; I wonder and I am moved: everything I see seems to me remarkable and new, everything is enveloped with an atmosphere of a sort of bright, caressing mystery, and already I think I hear the swift rustle of footsteps; and I stand, all alert and light, like a bird which has just folded its wings and is poised ready to soar aloft again—and my heart flames and quivers in joyous dread before the imminent happiness which is flitting on in front. . . .

IX

THEN I behold an ancient cathedral in a distant, beautiful land. The kneeling people are crowded close in rows; a prayerful chill, something solemn and sad breathes forth from the lofty, bare vault, from the huge pillars which branch upward.—Thou art standing by my side, speechless and unsympathetic, exactly as though thou wert a stranger to me; every fold of thy dark gown hangs motionless, as though sculptured; motionless lie the mottled reflections of the coloured windows at thy feet on the well-worn flagstones.—And now, vigorously agitating the air dim with incense, inwardly agitating us, in a heavy

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surge the tones of the organ roll out; and thou hast turned pale and drawn thyself up; thy gaze has touched me, has slipped on higher and is raised heavenward;—but it seems to me that only a deathless soul can look like that and with such eyes. . . .

X

Now another picture presents itself to me.—'T is not an ancient temple which crushes us with its stern magnificence: the low walls of a cosey little room separate us from the whole world.—What am I saying? We are alone—alone in all the world; except us two there is no living thing; beyond those friendly walls lie darkness and death and emptiness. That is not the wind howling, that is not the rain streaming in floods; it is Chaos wailing and groaning; it is its blind eyes weeping. But with us all is quiet and bright, and warm and gracious; something diverting, something childishly innocent is fluttering about like a butterfly, is it not? We nestle up to each other, we lean our heads together and both read a good book; I feel the slender vein in thy delicate temple beating; I hear how thou art living, thou hearest how I am living, thy smile is born upon my face before it comes on thine; thou silently repliest to my silent question; thy thoughts, my thoughts, are like the two wings of one and the

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same bird drowned in the azure. . . The last partitions have fallen—and our love has become so calm, so profound, every breach has vanished so completely, leaving no trace behind it, that we do not even wish to exchange a word, a glance. . . . We only wish to breathe, to breathe together, to live together, to be together, . . . and not even to be conscious of the fact that we are together. . . .

XI

OR, in conclusion, there presents itself to me a clear September morning when thou and I were walking together through the deserted garden, as yet not wholly out of bloom, of an abandoned palace, on the bank of a great non-Russian river, beneath the soft radiance of a cloudless sky. Oh, how shall I describe those sensations?—that endlessly-flowing river, that absence of people, and tranquillity, and joy, and a certain intoxicating sadness, and the vibration of happiness, the unfamiliar, monotonous town, the autumnal croaking of the daws in the tall, bright trees—and those affectionate speeches and smiles and glances long and soft, which pierce to the very bottom, and beauty,—the beauty in ourselves, round about, everywhere;—it is beyond words. Oh, bench on which we sat in silence, with heads drooping low with happiness—I shall never for-

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get thee to my dying hour!—How charming were those rare passers-by with their gentle greeting and kind faces, and the large, quiet boats which floated past (on one of them—dost thou remember?—stood a horse gazing pensively at the water gliding by under its feet), the childish babble of the little waves inshore and the very barking of distant dogs over the expanse of the river, the very shouts of the corpulent under-officer at the red-cheeked recruits drilling there on one side, with their projecting elbows and their legs thrust forward like the legs of cranes! . . . We both felt that there never had been and never would be anything better in the world for us than those moments—than all the rest. . . . But what comparisons are these! Enough . . . enough. . . . Alas! yes: it is enough.

XII

FOR the last time I have surrendered myself to these memories, and I am parting from them irrevocably—as a miser, after gloating for the last time upon his hoard, his gold, his bright treasure, buries it in the damp earth; as the wick of an exhausted lamp, after flashing up in one last brilliant flame, becomes covered with grey ashes. The little wild animal has peered forth for the last time from his lair at the velvety grass, at the fair little sun, at the blue, gracious waters,—and

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has retreated to the deepest level, and curled himself up in a ball, and fallen asleep. Will he have visions, if only in his sleep, of the fair little sun, and the grass, and the blue, gracious waters?

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XIII

STERNLY and ruthlessly does Fate lead each one of us—and only in the early days do we, occupied with all sorts of accidents, nonsense, ourselves, fail to feel her harsh hand.—So long as we are able to deceive ourselves and are not ashamed to lie, it is possible to live and to hope without shame. The truth—not the full truth (there can be no question of that), but even that tiny fraction which is accessible to us—immediately closes our mouths, binds our hands, and reduces “to negation.”—The only thing that is then left for a man, in order to keep erect on his feet and not crumble to dust, not to become bemired in the ooze of self-forgetfulness, . . . is self-scorn; is to turn calmly away from everything and say: “It is enough!”—and folding his useless arms on his empty breast to preserve the last, the sole merit which is accessible to him, the merit of recognising his own insignificance; the merit to which Pascal alludes, when, calling man a think-

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ing reed, he says that if the entire universe were to crush him, he, that reed, would still be higher than the universe because he would know that it is crushing him—while it would not know that. A feeble merit! Sad consolation! Try as thou mayest to permeate thyself with it, to believe in it,—oh, thou my poor brother, whosoever thou mayest be!—thou canst not refute those ominous words of the poet:

Life 's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. . .¹

I have cited the verses from “Macbeth,” and those witches, phantoms, visions have recurred to my mind. . . . Alas! it is not visions, not fantastic, subterranean powers that are terrible; the creations of Hoffmann are not dreadful, under whatsoever form they may present themselves. . . . The terrible thing is that there is nothing terrible, that the very substance of life itself is petty, uninteresting—and insipid to beggary. Having once become permeated with *this* consciousness, having once tasted of *this* wormwood, no honey will ever seem sweet—and even that loftiest, sweetest happiness, the happiness of love, of complete friendship, of irrevocable devotion—

¹ “Macbeth,” Act V, scene v.

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even it loses all its charm; all its worth is annihilated by its own pettiness, its brevity. Well, yes: a man has loved, he has burned, he has faltered words about eternal bliss, about immortal enjoyments—and behold: it is long, long since the last trace vanished of that worm which has eaten out the last remnants of his withered tongue. Thus late in autumn, on a frosty day, when everything is lifeless and dumb in the last blades of grass, on the verge of the denuded forest, the sun has but to emerge for an instant from the fog, to gaze intently at the chilled earth, and immediately, from all sides, gnats rise up; they frolic in the warmth of his rays, they bustle and jostle upward, downward, they circle round one another. . . . The sun hides himself, and the gnats fall to the earth in a soft rain—and there is an end to their momentary life.

XIV

“BUT are there no great conceptions, no great words of consolation? Nationality, right, liberty, humanity, art?” Yes; those words do exist, and many people live by them and for them. But nevertheless, I have an idea that if Shakspeare were to be born again he would find no occasion to disclaim his “Hamlet,” his “Lear.” His penetrating glance would not descry anything new in

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human existence: the same motley and, in reality, incoherent picture would still unfold itself before him in its disquieting monotony. The same frivolity, the same cruelty, the same pressing demand for blood, gold, filth, the same stale pleasures, the same senseless sufferings in the name of . . . well, in the name of the same nonsense which was ridiculed by Aristophanes three thousand years ago, the same coarse lures to which the many-headed beast still yields as readily as ever—in a word, the same anxious skipping of the squirrel in the same old wheel, which has not even been renewed. . . . Shakspeare would again make Lear repeat his harsh: “There are no guilty ones”—which, in other words, signifies: “There are no just”—and he also would say: “It is enough!” and he also would turn away.—One thing only: perhaps, in contrast to the gloomy, tragic tyrant Richard, the ironical genius of the great poet would like to draw another, more up-to-date tyrant, who is almost ready to believe in his own virtue and rests calmly at night or complains of the over-dainty dinner at the same time that his half-stifled victims are endeavouring to comfort themselves by at least imagining him as Richard III. surrounded by the ghosts of the people he has murdered. . . .

But to what purpose?

Why demonstrate—and that by picking and weighing one's words, by rounding and polishing

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one's speech—why demonstrate to gnats that they really are gnats?

XV

BUT art? . . . Beauty? . . . Yes, those are mighty words; they are, probably, mightier than those which I have mentioned above. The Venus of Melos, for example, is more indubitable than the Roman law, or than the principles of 1789. Men may retort—and how many times have I heard these retorts!—that beauty itself is also a matter of convention, that to the Chinese it presents itself in a totally different manner from what it does to the European. . . . But it is not the conventionality of art which disconcerts me; its perishableness, and again its perishableness,—its decay and dust—that is what deprives me of courage and of faith. Art, at any given moment, is, I grant, more powerful than Nature itself, because in it there is neither symphony of Beethoven nor picture of Ruysdael nor poem of Goethe—and only dull-witted pedants or conscienceless babblers can still talk of art as a copy of Nature. But in the long run Nature is irresistible; she cannot be hurried, and sooner or later she will assert her rights. Unconsciously and infallibly obedient to law, she does not know art, as she does not know liberty, as she does not know good; moving onward from eternity, trans-

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mitted from eternity, she tolerates nothing immortal, nothing unchangeable. . . . Man is her child; but the human, the artificial is inimical to her, precisely because she strives to be unchangeable and immortal. Man is the child of Nature; but she is the universal mother, and she has no preferences: everything which exists in her bosom has arisen only for the benefit of another and must, in due time, make way for that other—she creates by destroying, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to her what she creates, what she destroys, if only life be not extirpated, if only death do not lose its rights. . . . And therefore she as calmly covers with mould the divine visage of Phidias's Jupiter as she does a plain pebble, and delivers over to be devoured by the contemned moth the most precious lines of Sophocles. Men, it is true, zealously aid her in her work of extermination; but is not the same elementary force,—is not the force of Nature shown in the finger of the barbarian who senselessly shattered the radiant brow of Apollo, in the beast-like howls with which he hurled the picture of Apelles into the fire? How are we poor men, poor artists, to come to an agreement with this deaf and dumb force, blind from its birth, which does not even triumph in its victories, but marches, ever marches on ahead, devouring all things? How are we to stand up against those heavy, coarse, interminably and incessantly onrolling waves, how believe,

in short, in the significance and worth of those perishable images which we, in the darkness, on the verge of the abyss, mould from the dust and for a mere instant?

XVI

ALL this is so but only the transitory is beautiful, Shakspeare has said; and Nature herself, in the unceasing play of her rising and vanishing forms, does not shun beauty. Is it not she who sedulously adorns the most momentary of her offspring—the petals of the flowers, the wings of the butterfly—with such charming colours? Is it not she who imparts to them such exquisite outlines? It is not necessary for beauty to live forever in order to be immortal—one moment is sufficient for it. That is so; that is just, I grant you—but only in cases where there is no personality, where man is not, liberty is not: the faded wing of the butterfly comes back again, and a thousand years later, with the selfsame wing of the selfsame butterfly, necessity sternly and regularly and impartially fulfils its round but man does not repeat himself like the butterfly, and the work of his hands, his art, his free creation once destroyed, is annihilated forever. . . . To him alone is it given to “create” but it is strange and terrible to articulate: “We are creators for an hour,”—as there once was,

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they say, a caliph for an hour.—Therein lies our supremacy—and our curse: each one of these “creators” in himself—precisely he, not any one else, precisely that ego—seems to have been created with deliberate intent, on a plan previously designed; each one more or less dimly understands his significance, feels that he is akin to something higher, something eternal—and he lives, he is bound to live in the moment and for the moment.¹ Sit in the mud, my dear fellow, and strive toward heaven!—The greatest among us are precisely those who are the most profoundly conscious of all of that fundamental contradiction; but in that case the question arises,—are the words “greatest, great” appropriate?

XVII

BUT what shall be said of those to whom, despite a thorough desire to do so, one cannot apply those appellations even in the sense which is attributed to them by the feeble human tongue?—What shall be said of the ordinary, commonplace, second-rate, third-rate toilers—whoever they may be—statesmen, learned men, artists—especially ar-

¹ How can one fail to recall at this point the words of Mephistopheles in “Faust”:

“Er (Gott) findet sich in einen ew’gen Glanze,
Uns hat er in die Finsterniss gebracht—
Und euch taugt einzig Tag und Nacht.”

tists? How force them to shake off their dumb indolence, their dejected perplexity, how draw them once more to the field of battle, if once the thought as to the vanity of everything human, of every activity which sets for itself a higher aim than the winning of daily bread, has once crept into their heads? By what wreaths are they lured on—they, for whom laurels and thorns have become equally insignificant? Why should they again subject themselves to the laughter of “the cold throng” or to “the condemnation of the dunce,”—of the old dunce who cannot forgive them for having turned away from the former idols; of the young dunce who demands that they shall immediately go down on their knees in his company, that they should lie prone before new, just-discovered idols? Why shall they betake themselves again to that rag-fair of phantoms, to that market-place where both the seller and the buyer cheat each other equally, where everything is so noisy, so loud—and yet so poor and worthless? Why “with exhaustion in their bones” shall they interweave themselves again with that world where the nations, like peasant urchins on a festival day, flounder about in the mud for the sake of a handful of empty nuts, or admire with gaping mouths the wretched woodcuts, decorated with tinsel gold,—with that world where they had no right to life while they lived in it, and, deafening themselves with their own shouts, each one

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hastens with convulsive speed to a goal which he neither knows nor understands? No no
It is enough enough enough!

XVIII

. . . THE rest is silence.¹ . . .

¹ This is in English in the original. — TRANSLATOR.

THE DOG

(1866)

THE DOG

“**B**UT if we can admit the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its intervention in real life,—then allow me to inquire, what rôle is sound judgment bound to play after this?”—shouted Antón Stepánitch, crossing his arms on his stomach.

Antón Stepánitch had held the rank of State Councillor,¹ had served in some wonderful department, and, as his speech was interlarded with pauses and was slow and uttered in a bass voice, he enjoyed universal respect. Not long before the date of our story, “the good-for-nothing little Order of St. Stanislas had been stuck on him,” as those who envied him expressed it.

“That is perfectly just,”—remarked Skvorévitch.

“No one will dispute that,”—added Kinarévitch.

“I assent also,”—chimed in, in falsetto, from a corner the master of the house, Mr. Finoplén-toff.

¹ The fifth (from the top) of the fourteen grades in the Table of Ranks, instituted by Peter the Great, which were to be won by service to the State.—TRANSLATOR.

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“But I, I must confess, cannot assent, because something supernatural has happened to me,”—said a man of medium stature and middle age, with a protruding abdomen and a bald spot, who had been sitting silent before the stove up to that moment. The glances of all present in the room were turned upon him with curiosity and surprise—and silence reigned.

This man was a landed proprietor of Kalúga, not wealthy, who had recently come to Petersburg. He had once served in the hussars, had gambled away his property, resigned from the service and settled down in the country. The recent agricultural changes had cut off his revenues, and he had betaken himself to the capital in search of a snug little position. He possessed no abilities, and had no influential connections; but he placed great reliance on the friendship of an old comrade in the service, who had suddenly, without rhyme or reason, become a person of importance, and whom he had once aided to administer a sound thrashing to a card-sharper. Over and above that he counted upon his own luck—and it had not betrayed him; several days later he obtained the post of inspector of government storehouses, a profitable, even honourable position, which did not require extraordinary talents: the storehouses themselves existed only in contemplation, and no one even knew with cer-

tainty what they were to contain,—but they had been devised as a measure of governmental economy.

Antón Stepánitch was the first to break the general silence.

“What, my dear sir?”—he began. “Do you seriously assert that something supernatural—I mean to say, incompatible with the laws of nature—has happened to you?”

“I do,”—returned “my dear sir,” whose real name was Porfíry Kapítónitch.

“Incompatible with the laws of nature?”—energetically repeated Antón Stepánitch, who evidently liked that phrase.

“Precisely yes; precisely the sort of thing you allude to.”

“This is astonishing! What think you, gentlemen?”—Antón Stepánitch endeavoured to impart to his features an ironical expression, but without result—or, to speak more accurately, the only result was to produce the effect that Mr. State Councillor smelt a bad odour.—“Will not you be so kind, my dear sir,”—he went on, addressing the landed proprietor from Kalúga,—“as to communicate to us the particulars of such a curious event?”

“Why not? Certainly!”—replied the landed proprietor, and moving forward to the middle of the room in an easy manner, he spoke as follows:

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I HAVE, gentlemen, as you are probably aware, —or as you may not be aware,—a small estate in Kozyól County. I formerly derived some profit from it—but now, of course, nothing but unpleasantness is to be anticipated. However, let us put politics aside! Well, sir, on that same estate I have a “wee little” manor: a vegetable garden, as is proper, a tiny pond with little carp, and some sort of buildings—well, and a small wing for my own sinful body. . . . I am a bachelor. So, sir, one day—about six years ago—I had returned home rather late; I had been playing cards at a neighbour’s house—but I beg you to observe, I was not tipsy, as the expression goes. I undressed, got into bed, and blew out the light. And just imagine, gentlemen; no sooner had I blown out the light, than something began to rummage under my bed! Is it a rat? I thought. No, it was not a rat: it clawed and fidged and scratched itself. . . . At last it began to flap its ears!

It was a dog—that was clear. But where had the dog come from? I keep none myself. “Can some stray animal have run in?” I thought. I called to my servant; his name is Fílka. The man entered with a candle.

“What’s this,”—says I,—“my good Fílka? How lax thou art! A dog has intruded himself under my bed.”

“What dog?”—says he.

“How should I know?”—says I;—“that’s thy affair—not to allow thy master to be disturbed.”

My Fílka bent down, and began to pass the candle about under the bed.

“Why,”—says he,—“there’s no dog here.”

I bent down also; in fact there was no dog. . . . Here was a marvel! I turned my eyes on Fílka: he was smiling.

“Fool,”—said I to him,—“what art thou grinning about? When thou didst open the door the dog probably took and sneaked out into the ante-room. But thou, gaper, didst notice nothing, because thou art eternally asleep. Can it be that thou thinkest I am drunk?”

He attempted to reply, but I drove him out, curled myself up in a ring, and heard nothing more that night.

But on the following night—just imagine!—the same thing was repeated. No sooner had I blown out the light than it began to claw and flap its ears. Again I summoned Fílka, again he looked under the bed—again nothing! I sent him away, blew out the light—phew, damn it! there was the dog still. And a dog it certainly was: I could hear it breathing and rummaging in its hair with its teeth in search of fleas . . . so plainly!

THE DOG

"Fílka!"—says I,—“come hither without a light!” . . . He entered. . . . “Well, now,”—says I, “dost thou hear? . . .”

“I do,”—said he. I could not see him, but I felt that the fellow was quailing.

“What dost thou make of it?”—said I.

“What dost thou command me to make of it, Porfíry Kapítonitch? . . . ’T is an instigation of the Evil One!”

“Thou art a lewd fellow; hold thy tongue with thy instigation of the Evil One.” . . . But the voices of both of us were like those of birds, and we were shaking as though in a fever—in the darkness. I lighted a candle: there was no dog, and no noise whatever—only Fílka and I as white as clay. And I must inform you, gentlemen—you can believe me or not—but from that night forth for the space of six weeks the same thing went on. At last I even got accustomed to it and took to extinguishing my light because I cannot sleep with a light. “Let him fidget!” I thought. “It does n’t harm me.”

“But—I see—that you do not belong to the cowardly squad,”—interrupted Antón Stepá-nitch, with a half-scornful, half-condescending laugh. “The hussar is immediately perceptible!”

“I should not be frightened at you, in any case,”—said Porfíry Kapítonitch, and for a moment he really did look like a hussar.—“But listen further.”

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A neighbour came to me, the same one with whom I was in the habit of playing cards. He dined with me on what God had sent, and lost fifty rubles to me for his visit; night was drawing on—it was time for him to go. But I had calculations of my own:—"Stop and spend the night with me, Vasíly Vasílitch; to-morrow thou wilt win it back, God willing."

My Vasíly Vasílitch pondered and pondered—and stayed. I ordered a bed to be placed for him in my own chamber. . . . Well, sir, we went to bed, smoked, chattered,—chiefly about the feminine sex, as is fitting in bachelor society,—and laughed, as a matter of course. I look; Vasíly Vasílitch has put out his candle and has turned his back on me; that signifies: "*Schlafen Sie wohl.*" I waited a little and extinguished my candle also. And imagine: before I had time to think to myself, "What sort of performance will there be now?" my dear little animal began to make a row. And that was not all; he crawled out from under the bed, walked across the room, clattering his claws on the floor, wagging his ears, and suddenly collided with a chair which stood by the side of Vasíly Vasílitch's bed!

"Porfíry Kapítonitch,"—says Vasíly Vasílitch, and in such an indifferent voice, you know,—"I did n't know that thou hadst taken to keeping a dog. What sort of an animal is it—a setter?"

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"I have no dog,"—said I,—“and I never have had one.”

"Thou hast not indeed! But what's this?"

"What is this?"—said I.—“See here now; light the candle and thou wilt find out for thyself.”

"It is n't a dog?"

"No."

Vasíly Vasílitch turned over in bed.—“But thou art jesting, damn it?"

"No, I'm not jesting."—I hear him go scratch, scratch with a match, and that thing does not stop, but scratches its side. The flame flashed up and basta! There was not a trace of a dog! Vasíly Vasílitch stared at me—and I stared at him.

"What sort of a trick is this?"—said he.

"Why,"—said I,—“this is such a trick that if thou wert to set Socrates himself on one side and Frederick the Great on the other even they could n't make head or tail of it.”—And there-upon I told him all in detail. Up jumped my Vasíly Vasílitch as though he had been singed! He could n't get into his boots.

"Horses!"—he yelled—"horses!"

I began to argue with him, but in vain. He simply groaned.

"I won't stay,"—he shouted,—“not a minute!—Of course, after this, thou art a doomed man!—Horses!”

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But I prevailed upon him. Only his bed was dragged out into another room—and night-lights were lighted everywhere. In the morning, at tea, he recovered his dignity; he began to give me advice.

“Thou shouldst try absenting thyself from the house for several days, Porfíry Kapítónitch,” he said: “perhaps that vile thing would leave thee.”

But I must tell you that he—that neighbour of mine—had a capacious mind! he worked his mother-in-law so famously among other things: he palmed off a note of hand on her; which signifies that he chose the most vulnerable moment! She became like silk: she gave him a power of attorney over all her property—what more would you have? But that was a great affair—to twist his mother-in-law round his finger—was n’t it, hey? Judge for yourselves. But he went away from me somewhat discontented; I had punished him to the extent of another hundred rubles. He even swore at me: “Thou art ungrateful,”—he said, “thou hast no feeling;” but how was I to blame for that? Well, this is in parenthesis—but I took his suggestion under consideration. That same day I drove off to town and established myself in an inn, with an acquaintance, an old man of the Old Ritualist sect.¹

He was a worthy old man, although a trifle

¹Those who reject the official and necessary corrections made in the Scriptures and Church service books in the reign of Peter the Great’s father.—TRANSLATOR.

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harsh, because of loneliness: his whole family were dead. Only he did not favour tobacco at all,¹ and felt a great loathing for dogs; I believe, for example, that rather than admit a dog into the room he would have rent himself in twain! “For how is it possible?”—he said. “There in my room, on the wall, the Sovereign Lady herself deigns to dwell;² and shall a filthy dog thrust his accursed snout in there?”—That was ignorance, of course! However, this is my opinion: if any man has been vouchsafed wisdom, let him hold to it!

“But you are a great philosopher, I see,”—interrupted Antón Stepánitch again, with the same laugh as before.

This time Porfíry Kapítónitch even scowled.

“What sort of a philosopher I am no one knows,”—he said as his moustache twitched in a surly manner:—“but I would gladly take you as a pupil.”

We all fairly bored our eyes into Antón Stepánitch; each one of us expected an arrogant retort or at least a lightning glance. . . . But Mr. State Councillor altered his smile from scorn to indifference, then yawned, dangled his foot—and that was all!

¹The Old Ritualists oppose tea, coffee, and tobacco, chiefly, it would seem, because they are “newfangled,” having come into use after the schism. Later on they invented curious religious reasons for their denunciation of these and other things.—TRANSLATOR.

²The holy picture (*ikóna*) of the Mother of Christ.—TRANSLATOR.

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So then, I settled down at that old man's house—[went on Porfíry Kapítónitch].—He assigned me a room “for acquaintance's” sake,—not of the best; he himself lodged there also, behind a partition—and that was all I required. But what tortures I did undergo! The chamber was small, it was hot, stifling, and there were flies, and such sticky ones; in the corner was a remarkably large case for images, with ancient holy pictures; their garments were dim and puffed out; the air was fairly infected with olive-oil, and some sort of a spice in addition; on the bedstead were two down beds; if you moved a pillow, out ran a cockroach from beneath it. . . I drank an incredible amount of tea, out of sheer tedium—it was simply horrible! I got into bed; it was impossible to sleep.—And on the other side of the partition my host was sighing and grunting and reciting his prayers. I heard him begin to snore—and very lightly and courteously, in old-fashioned style. I had long since extinguished my candle—only the shrine-lamp was twinkling in front of the holy pictures. . . . A hindrance, of course! So I took and rose up softly, in my bare feet: I reached up to the lamp and blew it out. . . . Nothing happened.—“Aha!” I thought: “this means that he won't make a fuss in the house of strangers.” . . . But no sooner had I lain down on the bed than the row began again! The thing clawed, and

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scratched himself and flapped his ears well, just as I wanted him to. Good! I lay there and waited to see what would happen. I heard the old man wake up.

“Master,”—said he,—“hey there, master?”

“What’s wanted?”—said I.

“Was it thou who didst put out the shrine-lamp?”—And without awaiting my reply, he suddenly began to mumble:

“What’s that? What’s that? A dog? A dog? Akh, thou damned Nikonian!”¹

“Wait a bit, old man,”—said I,—“before thou cursest; but it would be better for thee to come hither thyself. Things deserving of wonder are going on here,”—said I.

The old man fussed about behind the partition and entered my room with a candle, a slender one, of yellow wax; and I was amazed as I looked at him! He was all bristling, with shaggy ears and vicious eyes like those of a polecat; on his head was a small skull-cap of white felt; his beard reached to his girdle and was white also; and he had on a waistcoat with brass buttons over his shirt, and fur boots on his feet, and he disseminated an odour of juniper. In that condition he went up to the holy pictures, crossed himself thrice with two fingers² lighted the shrine-lamp,

¹ The Old Ritualists’ most opprobrious epithet, designating a member of the State Church, which accepted the emendations instituted by Patriarch Nikon referred to in a previous note.—TRANSLATOR.

² One of the hotly disputed points of difference between the Old

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crossed himself again, and turning to me, merely grunted:

“Explain thyself!”

Thereupon, without the least delay, I communicated to him all the circumstances. The old man listened to all my explanations without uttering the smallest word; he simply kept shaking his head. Then he sat down on my bed, still maintaining silence. He scratched his breast, the back of his head, and other places, and still remained silent.

“Well, Feodúl Ivánitch,”—said I, “what is thy opinion: is this some sort of visitation of the Evil One, thinkest thou?”

The old man stared at me.—“A pretty thing thou hast invented! A visitation of the Evil One, forsooth! ’T would be all right at thy house, thou tobacco-user,—but ’t is quite another thing here! Only consider how many holy things there are here! And thou must needs have a visitation of the devil!—And if it is n’t that, what is it?”

The old man relapsed into silence, scratched himself again, and at last he said, but in a dull sort of way, because his moustache kept crawling into his mouth:

“Go thou to the town of Byéleff. There is only one man who can help thee. And that man

Ritualists and the members of the State Church is in their manner of crossing themselves. The latter use the forefinger, middle finger, and thumb joined at the tips. —TRANSLATOR.

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dwells in Byéleff;¹ he is one of our people. If he takes a fancy to help thee, that 's thy good luck; if he does n't take a fancy,—so it must remain."

"But how am I to find him?"—said I.

"We can give thee directions,"—said he;—"only why dost thou call this a visitation of the devil? 'T is a vision, or a sign; but thou wilt not be able to comprehend it; 't is not within thy flight. And now lie down and sleep under Christ's protection, dear little father; I will fumigate with incense; and in the morning we will take counsel together. The morning is wiser than the evening, thou knowest."

Well, sir, and we did take counsel together in the morning—only I came near choking to death with that same incense. And the old man instructed me after this wise: that when I had reached Byéleff I was to go to the public square, and in the second shop on the right inquire for a certain Prokhóritch; and having found Prokhóritch, I was to hand him a document. And the whole document consisted of a scrap of paper, on which was written the following: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. To Sergyéi Prokhóritch Pervúshin. Trust this man. Feodúly Ivánovitch." And below: "Send some cabbages, for God's sake."

¹ In the government of Tula, central Russia —TRANSLATOR.

I thanked the old man, and without further ado ordered my tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Byéleff. For I argued in this way: admitting that my nocturnal visitor did not cause me much grief, still, nevertheless, it was not quite decorous for a nobleman and an officer—what do you think about it?

“And did you really go to Byéleff?”—whispered Mr. Finopléntoff.

I did, straight to Byéleff. I went to the square, and inquired in the second shop on the right for Prokhóritch. “Is there such a man?”—I asked.

“There is,”—I was told.

“And where does he live?”

“On the Oká, beyond the vegetable-gardens.”

“In whose house?”¹

“His own.”

I wended my way to the Oká, searched out his house, that is to say, not actually a house, but a downright hovel. I beheld a man in a patched blue overcoat and a tattered cap,—of the petty burgher class, judging by his appearance,—standing with his back to me, and digging in his cabbage-garden.—I went up to him.

“Are you such and such a one?”—said I.

¹ Formerly, houses were not numbered, and addresses ran: “In the house of * * *” (the proprietor, man or woman), often with many complicated directions added to designate the special house. These ancient addresses still remain, along with the numbers or alone, especially on many of the houses in Moscow, and in country towns.—TRANSLATOR.

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He turned round,—and to tell you the truth, such piercing eyes I have never seen in all my life. But his whole face was no bigger than one's fist; his beard was wedge-shaped, and his lips were sunken: he was an aged man.

“ I am he,”—he said.—“ What do you wanta?”

“ Why, here,”—said I;—“ this is what I wanta,”—and I placed the document in his hand. He gazed at me very intently, and said:

“ Please come into the house; I cannot read without my spectacles.”

Well, sir, he and I went into his kennel—actually, a regular kennel; poor, bare, crooked; it barely held together. On the wall was a holy picture of ancient work,¹ as black as a coal; only the whites of the eyes were fairly burning in the faces of the holy people. He took some round iron spectacles from a small table, placed them on his nose, perused the writing, and through his spectacles again scrutinised me.

“ You have need of me?”

“ I have,”—said I,—“ that 's the fact.”

“ Well,”—said he, “ if you have, then make your statement, and I will listen.”

And just imagine; he sat down, and pulling a checked handkerchief from his pocket, he spread it out on his knees—and the handkerchief was full of holes—and gazed at me as solemnly as

¹ Old Ritualists will tolerate no others. Neither will they employ the words “ buy ” or “ sell ” in connection with these ikónas; they say “ exchange.”—TRANSLATOR.

though he had been a senator,¹ or some minister or other; and did not ask me to sit down. And what was still more astonishing, I suddenly felt myself growing timid, so timid . . . simply, my soul sank into my heels. He pierced me through and through with his eyes, and that 's all there is to be said! But I recovered my self-possession, and narrated to him my whole story. He remained silent for a while, shrank together, mowed with his lips, and then began to interrogate me, still as though he were a senator, so majestically and without haste. "What is your name?"—he asked. "How old are you? Who were your parents? Are you a bachelor or married?"—Then he began to mow with his lips again, frowned, thrust out his finger and said:

"Do reverence to the holy image of the honourable saints of Solovétzk,² Zósim and Saváty."

I made a reverence to the earth, and did not rise to my feet; such awe and submission did I feel for that man that I believe I would have instantly done anything whatsoever he might have ordered me! . . . I see that you are smiling, gentlemen; but I was in no mood for laughing then, by Heaven I was not.

"Rise, sir,"—he said at last.—"It is possible to help you. This has not been sent to you by

¹ The Senate in Russia is the Supreme Court of Appeals, and the senators are appointed, not elected.—TRANSLATOR.

² A famous monastery on an island in the White Sea.—TRANSLATOR.

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way of punishment, but as a warning; it signifies that you are being looked after; some one is praying earnestly for you. Go now to the bazaar and buy yourself a bitch, which you must keep by you day and night, without ceasing. Your visions will cease, and your dog will prove necessary to you into the bargain."

A flash of light seemed suddenly to illuminate me; how those words did please me! I made obeisance to Prokhóritch, and was on the point of departing, but remembered that it was impossible for me not to show him my gratitude; I drew a three-ruble note from my pocket. But he put aside my hand and said to me:

"Give it to our chapel, or to the poor, for this service is gratis."

Again I made him an obeisance, nearly to the girdle, and immediately marched off to the bazaar. And fancy, no sooner had I begun to approach the shops when behold, a man in a frieze cloak advanced to meet me, and under his arm he carried a setter bitch, two months old, with light-brown hair, a white muzzle, and white fore paws.

"Halt!" said I to the man in the frieze cloak; "what will you take for her?"

"Two rubles in silver."

"Take three!"

The man was astonished, and thought the gentleman had lost his mind—but I threw a bank-note in his teeth, seized the bitch in my arms, and

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rushed to my tarantás. The coachman harnessed up the horses briskly, and that same evening I was at home. The dog sat on my lap during the whole journey—and never uttered a sound; but I kept saying to her: “Tresórushko! Tresórushko!” I immediately gave her food and water, ordered straw to be brought, put her to bed, and dashed into bed myself. I blew out the light; darkness reigned.

“Come now, begin!”—said I.—Silence.—“Do begin, thou thus and so!”—Not a sound. It was laughable. I began to take courage.—“Come now, begin, thou thus and so, and ’t other thing!” But nothing happened—there was a complete lull! The only thing to be heard was the bitch breathing hard.

“Fílka!”—I shouted;—“Fílka! Come hither, stupid man!”—He entered.—“Dost thou hear the dog?”

“No, master,”—said he,—“I don’t hear anything,”—and began to laugh.

“And thou wilt not hear it again forever! Here ’s half a ruble for thee for vodka!”

“Please let me kiss your hand,”—said the fool, and crawled to me in the dark. . . . My joy was great, I can tell you!

“And was that the end of it all?”—asked Antón Stepánitch, no longer ironically.

The visions did cease, it is true—and there were no disturbances of any sort—but wait, that

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was not the end of the whole matter. My Tresó-rushko began to grow, and turned out a cunning rogue. Thick-tailed, heavy, flop-eared, with drooping dewlaps, she was a regular "take-advance,"—a thoroughgoing good setter. And moreover, she became greatly attached to me. Hunting is bad in our parts,—well, but as I had set up a dog I had to supply myself with a gun also. I began to roam about the surrounding country with my Tresór; sometimes I would knock over a hare (my heavens, how she did course those hares!), and sometimes a quail or a duck. But the chief point was that Tresór never, never strayed a step away from me. Wherever I went, there she went also; I even took her to the bath with me—truly! One of our young gentlewomen undertook to eject me from her drawing-room on account of Tresór; but I raised such a row that I smashed some of her window-panes!

Well, sir, one day—it happened in summer. . . . And I must tell you that there was such a drought that no one could recall its like; the air was full of something which was neither smoke nor fog; there was an odour of burning, and mist, and the sun was like a red-hot cannon-ball; and the dust was such that one could not leave off sneezing! People went about with their mouths gaping open, just like crows.

It bored me to sit at home constantly in complete undress, behind closed shutters; and by the

way, the heat was beginning to moderate. . . . And so, gentlemen, I set off afoot to the house of one of my neighbours. This neighbour of mine lived about a verst from me,—and was really a benevolent lady. She was still young and blooming, and of the most attractive exterior; only she had a fickle disposition. But that is no detriment in the feminine sex; it even affords pleasure. . . . So, then, I trudged to her porch—and that trip seemed very salt to me! Well, I thought, Nimfodóra Semyónovna will regale me with bilberry-water, and other refreshments—and I had already grasped the door-handle when, suddenly, around the corner of the servants' cottage there arose a trampling of feet, a squealing and shouting of small boys. . . . I looked round. O Lord, my God! Straight toward me was dashing a huge, reddish beast, which at first sight I did not recognise as a dog; its jaws were gaping, its eyes were blood-shot, its hair stood on end. . . . Before I could take breath the monster leaped upon the porch, elevated itself on its hind legs, and fell straight on my breast. What do you think of that situation? I was swooning with fright, and could not lift my arms; I was completely stupefied; . . . all I could see were the white tusks right at the end of my nose, the red tongue all swathed in foam. But at that moment another dark body soared through the air in front of me, like a ball—it was my darling Tresór coming to

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my rescue; and she went at that beast's throat like a leech! The beast rattled hoarsely in the throat, gnashed its teeth, staggered back. . . . With one jerk I tore open the door, and found myself in the anteroom. I stood there, beside myself with terror, threw my whole body against the lock, and listened to a desperate battle which was in progress on the porch. I began to shout, to call for help; every one in the house took alarm. Nimfodóra Semyónovna ran up with hair unbraided; voices clamoured in the courtyard—and suddenly there came a cry: "Hold him, hold him, lock the gate!"

I opened the door,—just a crack,—and looked. The monster was no longer on the porch. People were rushing in disorder about the courtyard, flourishing their arms, picking up billets of wood from the ground—just as though they had gone mad. "To the village! It has run to the village!" shrieked shrilly a peasant-woman in a pointed coronet head-dress of unusual dimensions, thrusting her head through a garret-window. I emerged from the house.

"Where is Tresór?"—said I.—And at that moment I caught sight of my saviour. She was walking away from the gate, limping, all bitten, and covered with blood. . . .

"But what was it, after all?"—I asked the people, as they went circling round the courtyard like crazy folk.

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“A mad dog!”—they answered me, “belonging to the Count; it has been roving about here since yesterday.”

We had a neighbour, a Count; he had introduced some very dreadful dogs from over-sea. My knees gave way beneath me; I hastened to the mirror and looked to see whether I had been bitten. No; God be thanked, nothing was visible; only, naturally, my face was all green; but Nimfodóra Semyónovna was lying on the couch, and clucking like a hen. And that was easily to be understood: in the first place, nerves; in the second place, sensibility. But she came to herself, and asked me in a very languid way: was I alive? I told her that I was, and that Tresór was my saviour.

“Akh,”—said she,—“what nobility! And I suppose the mad dog smothered her?”

“No,”—said I,—“it did not smother her, but it wounded her seriously.”

“Akh,”—said she,—“in that case, she must be shot this very moment!”

“Nothing of the sort,”—said I;—“I won’t agree to that; I shall try to cure her.” . . .

In the meanwhile, Tresór began to scratch at the door; I started to open it for her.

“Akh,”—cried she,—“what are you doing? Why, she will bite us all dreadfully!”

“Pardon me,”—said I,—“the poison does not take effect so soon.”

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“Akh,”—said she,—“how is that possible? Why, you have gone out of your mind!”

“Nimfótchka,”—said I,—“calm thyself; listen to reason. . . .”

But all at once she began to scream: “Go away; go away this instant with your disgusting dog!”

“I will go,”—said I.

“Instantly,”—said she,—“this very second! Take thyself off, brigand,”—said she,—“and don’t dare ever to show yourself in my sight again. Thou mightest go mad thyself!”

“Very good, ma’am,”—said I; “only give me an equipage, for I am afraid to go home on foot now.”

She riveted her eyes on me. “Give, give him a calash, a carriage, a drozhky, whatever he wants, —anything, for the sake of getting rid of him as quickly as possible. Akh, what eyes! akh, what eyes he has!”—And with these words she flew out of the room, dealing a maid who was entering a box on the ear,—and I heard her go off into another fit of hysterics.—And you may believe me or not, gentlemen, but from that day forth I broke off all acquaintance with Nimfodóra Semyónovna; and, taking all things into mature consideration, I cannot but add that for that circumstance also I owe my friend Tresór a debt of gratitude until I lie down in my coffin.

Well, sir, I ordered a calash to be harnessed, placed Tresór in it, and drove off home with her.

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At home I looked her over, washed her wounds, and thought to myself: "I 'll take her to-morrow, as soon as it is light, to the wizard in Efrém County. Now this wizard was an old peasant, a wonderful man; he would whisper over water—but others say that he emitted serpents' venom on it—and give it to you to drink, and your malady would instantly disappear. By the way, I thought, I 'll get myself bled in Efrémovo; 't is a good remedy for terror; only, of course, not from the arm, but from the bleeding-vein.

"But where is that place—the bleeding-vein?"—inquired Finopléntoff, with bashful curiosity.

Don't you know? That spot on the fist close to the thumb, on which one shakes snuff from the horn.—Just here, see! 'T is the very best place for blood-letting; therefore, judge for yourselves; from the arm it will be venal blood, while from this spot it is sparkling. The doctors don't know that, and don't understand it; how should they, the sluggards, the dumb idiots? Blacksmiths chiefly make use of it. And what skilful fellows they are! They 'll place their chisel on the spot, give it a whack with their hammer—and the deed is done! . . . Well, sir, while I was meditating in this wise, it had grown entirely dark out of doors, and it was time to go to sleep. I lay down on my bed, and Tresór, of course, was there also. But whether it was because of my fright or of the stifling heat, or because the fleas

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or my thoughts were bothersome, at any rate, I could not get to sleep. Such distress fell upon me as it is impossible to describe; and I kept drinking water, and opening the window, and thrumming the “Kamárynskaya”¹ on the guitar, with Italian variations. . . . In vain! I felt impelled to leave the room,—and that’s all there was to it. At last I made up my mind. I took a pillow, a coverlet, and a sheet, and wended my way across the garden to the hay-barn; well, and there I settled myself. And there things were agreeable to me, gentlemen; the night was still, extremely still, only now and then a breeze as soft as a woman’s hand would blow across my cheek, and it was very cool; the hay was fragrant as tea, the katydids were rasping in the apple-trees; then suddenly a quail would emit its call—and you would feel that he was taking his ease, the scamp, sitting in the dew with his mate. . . . And the sky was so magnificent; the stars were twinkling, and sometimes a little cloud, as white as wadding, would float past, and even it would hardly stir. . . .

At this point in the narrative, Skvorévitch sneezed; Kinarévitch, who never lagged behind his comrade in anything, sneezed also. Antón Stepánitch cast a glance of approbation at both.

Well, sir—[went on Porfíry Kapítonitch],—

¹ A vivacious and favourite popular dance-tune. It is several centuries old, and of interesting historical origin.—TRANSLATOR.

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so I lay there, and still I could not get to sleep. A fit of meditation had seized upon me; and I pondered chiefly over the great marvel, how that Prokhóritch had rightly explained to me about the warning—and why such wonders should happen to me in particular. . . . I was astonished, in fact, because I could not understand it at all—while Tresórushko whimpered as she curled herself up on the hay; her wounds were paining her. And I 'll tell you another thing that kept me from sleeping—you will hardly believe it; the moon! It stood right in front of me, so round and big and yellow and flat; and it seemed to me as though it were staring at me—by Heaven it did; and so arrogantly, importunately. . . . At last I stuck my tongue out at it, I really did. Come, I thought, what art thou so curious about? I turned away from it; but it crawled into my ear, it illuminated the back of my head, and flooded me as though with rain; I opened my eyes, and what did I see? It made every blade of grass, every wretched little blade in the hay, the most insignificant spider's web, stand out distinctly! “Well, look, then!” said I. There was no help for it. I propped my head on my hand and began to stare at it. But I could not keep it up; if you will believe it, my eyes began to stick out like a hare's and to open very wide indeed, just as though they did not know what sleep was like. I think I could have eaten up everything

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with those same eyes. The gate of the hay-barn stood wide open; I could see for a distance of five versts out on the plain; and distinctly, not in the usual way on a moonlight night. So I gazed and gazed, and did not even wink. . . . And suddenly it seemed to me as though something were waving about far, far away, . . . exactly as though things were glimmering indistinctly before my eyes. Some time elapsed; again a shadow leaped across my vision,—a little nearer now; then again, still nearer. What is it? I thought. Can it be a hare? No, I thought, it is larger than a hare, and its gait is unlike that of a hare. I continued to look, and again the shadow showed itself, and it was moving now across the pasture-land (and the pasture-land was whitish from the moonlight) like a very large spot; it was plain that it was some sort of a wild beast—a fox or a wolf. My heart contracted within me . . . but what was I afraid of, after all? Are n't there plenty of wild animals running about the fields by night? But my curiosity was stronger than my fears; I rose up, opened my eyes very wide, and suddenly turned cold all over. I fairly froze rigid on the spot, as though I had been buried in ice up to my ears; and why? The Lord only knows! And I saw the shadow growing bigger and bigger, which meant that it was making straight for the hay-barn. . . . And then it became apparent to me that it really was a large,

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big-headed wild beast. . . . It dashed onward like a whirlwind, like a bullet. . . . Good heavens! What was it? Suddenly it stopped short, as though it scented something. . . . Why, it was the mad dog I had encountered that day! 'T was he, 't was he! O Lord! And I could not stir a finger, I could not shout. . . . It ran to the gate, glared about with its eyes, emitted a howl, and dashed straight for me on the hay!

But out of the hay, like a lion, sprang my Tre-sór; and then the struggle began. The two clinched jaw to jaw, and rolled over the ground in a ball! What took place further I do not remember; all I do remember is that I flew head over heels across them, just as I was, into the garden, into the house, and into my own bedroom! I almost dived under the bed—there 's no use in concealing the fact. And what leaps, what bounds I made in the garden! You would have taken me for the leading ballerina who dances before the Emperor Napoleon on the day of his Angel—and even she could n't have overtaken me. But when I had recovered myself a little, I immediately routed out the entire household; I ordered them all to arm themselves, and I myself took a sword and a revolver. (I must confess that I had purchased that revolver after the Emancipation, in case of need, you know—only I had hit upon such a beast of a pedlar that out of three charges two inevitably missed fire.)

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Well, sir, I took all this, and in this guise we sallied forth, in a regular horde, with staves and lanterns, and directed our footsteps toward the hay-barn. We reached it and called—nothing was to be heard; we entered the barn at last. . . . And what did we see? My poor Tresó-rushko lay dead, with her throat slit, and that accursed beast had vanished without leaving a trace!

Then, gentlemen, I began to bleat like a calf, and I will say it without shame; I fell down on the body of my twofold rescuer, so to speak, and kissed her head for a long time. And there I remained in that attitude until my old house-keeper, Praskóvya, brought me to my senses (she also had run out at the uproar).

“Why do you grieve so over the dog, Porfíry Stepánitch?”—said she. “You will surely catch cold, which God forbid!” (I was very lightly clad.) “And if that dog lost her life in saving you, she ought to reckon it as a great favour!”

Although I did not agree with Praskóvya, I went back to the house. And the mad dog was shot on the following day by a soldier from the garrison. And it must have been that that was the end appointed by Fate to the dog, for the soldier fired a gun for the first time in his life, although he had a medal for service in the year '12. So that is the supernatural occurrence which happened to me.

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THE narrator ceased speaking and began to fill his pipe. But we all exchanged glances of surprise.

“But perhaps you lead a very upright life,”—began Mr. Finopléntoff,—“and so by way of reward” But at that word he faltered, for he saw that Porfíry Kapítónitch’s cheeks were beginning to swell out and turn red, and his eyes too were beginning to pucker up—evidently the man was on the point of breaking out. . . .

“But admitting the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its interference in everyday life, so to speak,”—began Antón Stepánitch:—“then what rôle, after this, must sound sense play?”

None of us found any answer, and, as before, we remained perplexed.

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PHANTOMS

(1863)

PHANTOMS

A FANTASY

One instant . . . and the magic tale is o'er—
And with the possible the soul is filled once more.

A. FET.¹

I

I COULD not get to sleep for a long time, and kept tossing incessantly from side to side. “May the devil take those table-tipping follies!”—I thought:—“they only upset the nerves.”—Drowsiness began to overpower me. . .

Suddenly it seemed to me as though a chord had twanged faintly and lugubriously in the room.

I raised my head. The moon was hanging low in the sky, and staring me straight in the eye. White as chalk its light lay on the floor. . . . The strange sound was clearly repeated.

I leaned on my elbow. A slight alarm nipped at my heart.—One minute passed, then another. . . . A cock crowed somewhere in the distance; still further away another answered.

I dropped my head on my pillow. “Just see

¹The pseudonym of Afanásy Afanásevitch Shénshin
(1820–1892).—TRANSLATOR.

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to what one can bring one's self," I began my reflections again:—"my ears will begin to ring."

A little later I fell asleep—or it seemed to me that I did. I had a remarkable dream. It seemed to me as though I were lying in my bedroom, in my bed, but I was not asleep, and could not close my eyes. . . . I turned over. . . . The streak of moonlight on the floor softly began to rise up, to straighten itself, to become slightly rounded at the top. . . . Before me, transparent as mist, a white woman stood motionless.

"Who art thou?"—I asked with an effort.

The voice which replied was like the rustling of leaves.—"It is I . . . I . . . I . . . I have come for thee."

"For me? But who art thou?"

"Come by night to the corner of the forest, where the old oak stands. I shall be there."

I tried to get a good look at the features of the mysterious woman—and suddenly I gave an involuntary start: I felt a chill breath on me. And now I was no longer lying in my bed, but sitting on it—and there, where the spectre had seemed to stand, the moonlight lay in a long streak on the floor.

II

THE day passed after a fashion. I remember that I tried to read, to work . . . it came to no-

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thing. Night arrived. My heart beat violently within me, as though I were expecting something. I went to bed and turned my face to the wall.

“Why didst thou not come?”—an audible whisper rang out in the room.

I glanced round swiftly.

It was she again . . . the mysterious phantom. Motionless eyes in a motionless face, and a gaze full of grief.

“Come!”—the whisper made itself heard again.

“I will come,”—I replied, with involuntary terror. The phantom quietly swayed forward, and became all mixed up, undulating lightly like smoke;—and the moonlight again lay white upon the polished floor.

III

I PASSED the day in a state of agitation. At supper I drank almost a whole bottle of wine, and started to go out on the porch; but returned, and flung myself on my bed. My blood was surging heavily through my veins.

Again a sound made itself heard. . . . I shuddered, but did not look round. Suddenly I felt some one clasp me in a close embrace from behind, and whisper in my ear: “Come, come, come!” . . . Trembling with fright I groaned:

“I will come!”—and straightened myself up.

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The woman stood bending over me, close beside the head of my bed. She smiled faintly and vanished. But I had succeeded in scrutinising her face. It seemed to me that I had seen her before;—but where? when? I rose late and roamed about the fields all day long, approached the old oak-tree on the border of the forest, and made an attentive inspection of the surroundings.

Toward evening I seated myself at an open window in my study. The old housekeeper set a cup of tea before me—but I did not taste it. . . . I kept wondering and asking myself: “Am not I losing my mind?” The sun had only just set—and not only did the sky grow red, but the whole air suddenly became suffused with an almost unnatural crimson; the leaves and grass, as though covered with fresh varnish, did not stir; in their stony immobility, in the sharp brilliancy of their outlines, in that commingling of a strong glow and death-like tranquillity, there was something strange, enigmatical. A rather large grey bird flew up without any sound, and alighted on the very edge of the window. . . . I looked at it—and it looked at me askance with its round, dark eye. “I wonder if she did not send thee in order to remind me?”—I thought.

The bird immediately fluttered its soft wings, and flew away, as before, without any noise. I sat for a long time still at the window, but I no longer gave myself up to wonder: I seemed to

have got into a charmed circle, and an irresistible though quiet power was drawing me on, as the onrush of the torrent draws the boat while still far away from the falls. At last I gave a start. The crimson had long since disappeared from the air, the hues had darkened, and the enchanted silence had ceased. A breeze was beginning to flutter about, the moon stood out with ever-increasing distinctness in the sky which was turning darkly blue,—and soon the leaves on the trees began to gleam silver and black in its cold rays. My old woman entered my study with a lighted candle, but the draught from the window blew on it and extinguished the flame. I could endure it no longer; I sprang to my feet, banged my cap down on my head, and set out for the corner of the forest, for the aged oak.

IV

MANY years before, this oak had been struck by lightning; its crest had been shattered and had withered away, but it still retained life enough for several centuries. As I began to draw near to it, a dark cloud floated across the moon: it was very dark under its wide-spreading boughs. At first I did not notice anything peculiar; but I glanced to one side—and my heart sank within me; a white figure was standing motionless beside

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a tall bush, between the oak-tree and the forest. My hair rose slightly on my head; but I summoned my courage, and advanced toward the forest.

Yes, it was she, my nocturnal visitor. As I approached her, the moon shone forth again. She seemed all woven of semi-transparent, milky vapour,—through her face I could see a branch softly waving in the wind,—only her hair and eyes shone dimly-black, and on one of the fingers of her clasped hands gleamed a narrow gold ring. I halted in front of her, and tried to speak; but my voice died in my breast, although I no longer felt any real terror. Her eyes were turned upon me; their gaze expressed neither grief nor joy, but a certain lifeless attention. I waited to see whether she would utter a word; but she stood motionless and dumb, and kept gazing at me with her deadly-intent look. Again I began to feel uneasy.

“I have come!”—I exclaimed at last with an effort. My voice had a dull, queer ring.

“I love thee,”—a whisper became audible.

“Thou lovest me!”—I repeated in amazement.

“Give thyself to me,”—rustled the voice again in reply to me.

“Give myself to thee! But thou art a phantom—thou hast no body.”—A strange sensation overpowered me.—“What art thou,—smoke, air, vapour? Give myself to thee! Answer me first—

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who art thou? Hast thou lived upon earth?
Whence hast thou revealed thyself?"

"Give thyself to me. I will do thee no harm.
Say only two words: 'Take me.'"

I looked at her. "What is that she is saying?"
I thought. "What is the meaning of all this?
And how will she take me? Shall I try the ex-
periment?"

"Well, very good,"—I uttered aloud, and
with unexpected force, as though some one had
given me a push from behind. "Take me!"

Before I had finished uttering these words, the
mysterious figure, with a sort of inward laugh,
which made her face quiver for an instant, swayed
forward, her arms separated and were out-
stretched. . . . I tried to spring aside; but I was
already in her power. She clasped me in her em-
brace, my body rose about fourteen inches from
the earth—and we both soared off, smoothly and
not too swiftly, over the wet, motionless grass.

V

At first my head reeled, and I involuntarily closed
my eyes. . . . A minute later, I opened them
again. We were floating on as before. But the
forest was no longer visible; beneath us lay out-
spread a level plain dotted with dark spots. With
terror I convinced myself that we had risen to a
fearful height.

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"I am lost—I am in the power of Satan," flashed through me like lightning. Up to that moment, the thought of obsession by an unclean power, of the possibility of damnation, had not entered my head. We continued to dash head-long onward, and seemed to be soaring ever higher and higher.

"Whither art thou carrying me?"—I moaned at last.

"Wherever thou wishest,"—replied my fellow-traveller. She was sticking close to me all over; her face almost rested on my face. Nevertheless, I barely felt her touch.

"Let me down to the earth; I feel giddy at this height."

"Good; only shut your eyes and do not take breath."

I obeyed—and immediately felt myself falling, like a stone which has been hurled. . . . the wind whistled through my hair. When I came to myself, we were again floating close above the ground, so that we caught in the tips of the tall plants.

"Set me on my feet,"—I began.—"What pleasure is there in flying? I am not a bird."

"I thought it would be agreeable to you. We have no other occupation."

"You have not? But who are you?"

There was no answer.

"Thou dost not dare to tell me that?"

A plaintive sound, like that which had awakened me on the first night, trembled on my ear. In the meantime, we continued to move almost imperceptibly through the night air.

“Let me go!”—I said. My companion bent backward, and I found myself on my feet. She came to a halt in front of me and again clasped her hands. I recovered my equanimity and looked her in the face: as before, it expressed submissive grief.

“Where are we?”—I queried. I did not recognise my surroundings.

“Far from thy home, but thou mayest be there in one moment.”

“In what manner? Am I to trust myself to thee again?”

“I have not done and will not do thee any harm. We shall float together until dawn, that is all. I can carry thee whithersoever thou wishest—to all the ends of the earth. Give thyself to me; say again: ‘Take me!’”

“Well, then take me!”

Again she fell upon my neck, again my feet left the earth—and away we flew.

VI

“WHITHER?”—she asked me.

“Straight ahead, ever straight ahead.”

“But the forest lies in that direction.”

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“Let us rise above the forest—only, very gently.”

We soared aloft, like wood-snipe flying upon a birch-tree, and again floated on in a straight line. Instead of grass, the crests of the trees flitted past under our feet. It was wonderful to see the forest from above, its bristling spine all illuminated by the moon. It seemed some sort of a vast slumbering wild beast, and accompanied us with a broad, incessant rustling, resembling an unintelligible growl. Here and there we came across small glades; a dentated strip of shadow stood out finely in black on one side of them. . . . Now and then a hare cried pitifully below; up above, an owl whistled, also in plaintive wise; there was an odour of mushrooms, of buds, of lovage abroad in the air; the moonlight fairly poured in a flood in all directions—coldly and severely; the myriad stars glittered directly above our heads.

And now the forest was left behind; athwart the plain stretched a strip of mist; a river flowed there. We floated along one of its shores, above the bushes, rendered heavy and immovable by humidity. The waves on the river now glistened with a blue gleam, now rolled on darkly and as though they were vicious. In places a thin vapour moved strangely above it, and the cups of the water-lilies shone out with the virginal and sumptuous whiteness of all their unfolded petals, as

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though they knew that they were inaccessible. I took it into my head to pluck one of them—and lo! I immediately found myself directly over the smooth surface of the river. . . . The dampness struck me unpleasantly in the face as soon as I had broken the strong stem of a large blossom. We began to flit from shore to shore, like the sand-pipers, which we kept waking, and which we pursued. More than once it happened that we flew down upon a little family of wild ducks, disposed in a circle on a clear spot among the reeds—but they did not stir; perhaps one of them would hastily take its head out from under its wing, look and look, and then anxiously thrust its bill back again into its downy feathers; or another would quack faintly, its whole body quivering the while. We frightened one heron; it rose out of a willow bush, with dangling legs, and flapped its wings with awkward vigour; it really did seem to me then to resemble a German. Not a fish splashed anywhere—they, too, were asleep. I began to get used to the sensation of flying, and even found a certain pleasure in it; any one who has chanced to fly in his sleep will understand me. I took to watching with great attention the strange being, thanks to whom such improbable events were happening to me.

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VII

SHE was a woman with a small, non-Russian face. Greyish-white, semi-transparent, with barely-defined shadows, it reminded one of the figures on an alabaster vase illuminated from within—and again it seemed to be familiar to me.

“ May I talk with thee? ”—I said.

“ Speak.”

“ I see that thou hast a ring on thy finger; so thou hast dwelt on earth—thou hast been married? ”

I paused. . . . There was no reply.

“ What is thy name—or what was thy name, at least? ”

“ Call me Ellis.”

“ Ellis! That is an English name? Art thou an English woman? Thou hast known me before? ”

“ No.”

“ Why didst thou reveal thyself to me in particular? ”

“ I love thee.”

“ And art thou content? ”

“ Yes; we are floating, we are circling, you and I, through the pure air.”

“ Ellis! ”—I said suddenly,—“ perchance thou art a guilty, a damned soul? ”

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My companion's head dropped.—“ I do not understand thee,”—she whispered.

“ I adjure thee, in God's name” I was beginning.

“ What art thou saying? ”—she said with surprise.—“ I do not understand.”—It seemed to me that the arm which lay about my waist like a girdle, was moving gently. . . .

“ Fear not,”—said Ellis,—“ fear not, my dear one!”—Her face turned and moved closer to my face. . . . I felt on my lips a strange sensation, like the touch of a soft, delicate sting. . . . Leeches which are not vicious take hold in that way.

VIII

I GLANCED downward. We had again managed to rise to a very considerable height. We were flying over a county capital with which I was unfamiliar, situated on the slope of a broad hill. The churches reared themselves amid a dark mass of wooden roofs and fruit orchards; a long bridge lowered black at a curve in the river; everything was silent, overwhelmed with sleep. The very domes and crosses seemed to glitter with a dumb gleam; dumbly the tall poles of the wells reared themselves aloft beside the round clumps of willows; the whitish highway dumbly plunged, like a narrow dart, into one end of the town—and

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dumbly emerged from the other side upon the gloomy expanse of the monotonous fields.

“What town is that?”—I queried.

“***off, in the *** Government.”

“***off, in the *** Government?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I am very far from home!”

“For us distance is nothing.”

“Really?” Sudden boldness flashed up within me.—“Then carry me to South America!”

“I cannot go to America. It is day there now.”

“While you and I are night birds? Well, somewhere or other, only as far off as possible.”

“Close thine eyes and do not draw breath,”—replied Ellis,—and we dashed headlong onward with the swiftness of the whirlwind. The wind rushed into my ears with a crashing noise.

We halted, but the noise did not cease. On the contrary, it had become converted into a sort of menacing roar, a thunderous din. . . .

“Now thou mayest open thine eyes,”—said Ellis.

IX

I OBEYED. . . . My God, where was I?

Overhead were heavy, smoky clouds; they were crowding together, and flying like a herd of vicious monsters and yonder, below, was another monster: the raging, just that,—raging

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sea. . . . The white foam was glistening convulsively, and seething in it in mounds,—and rearing aloft in shaggy billows, it was pounding with harsh thunder on the pitch-black cliffs. The howling of the storm, the icy breath of the heaving deep, the heavy dashing of the surf, in which, at times, one seemed to hear something resembling howls, the distant firing of cannon, the ringing of bells, the torturing shriek, and the grinding of the pebbles on the shore, the sudden scream of an invisible gull, on the troubled horizon the reeling remains of a ship—everywhere death, death and horror. . . . My head began to reel, and swooning, I again closed my eyes. . . .

“What is this? Where are we?”

“On the southern shore of the Isle of Wight, in front of the Blackgang Cliff, where ships are so frequently dashed to pieces,”—said Ellis, this time with peculiar distinctness and, as it seemed to me, not without malicious joy. . . .

“Take me away, away from here. . . . home! Home!”

I shrank together utterly, I clutched my face in my hands. . . . I felt that we were floating still more swiftly than before; the wind no longer howled nor whistled—it shrieked through my hair, in my garments. . . . I gasped for breath. . . .

“Now stand on thy feet,”—rang out the voice of Ellis.

I tried to control myself, my consciousness. . . .

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I felt the ground under foot, but heard nothing, as though everything round about had died . . . only the blood beat irregularly in my temples, and my head still reeled with a faint, internal sound. I straightened myself up and opened my eyes.

X

WE were on the dam of my pond. Directly in front of me, athwart the pointed leaves of the willows, its broad expanse was visible with filaments of feathery mist clinging to it here and there. On the right a field of rye glinted dully; on the left the trees of the garden reared themselves aloft, long, motionless, and damp in appearance. . . . Morning had not yet breathed upon them. Across the sky two or three clouds were stretched, obliquely, like wreaths of smoke; they seemed yellowish, and the first faint reflection of the dawn fell on them, God knows whence: the eye could not yet detect on the whitening horizon the spot from which it must be borrowed. The stars had disappeared; nothing was stirring yet, although everything was already awake in the enchanted stillness of early morning.

“The morning! Yonder is the morning!”—exclaimed Ellis in my very ear. . . . “Farewell! until to-morrow!”

I turned. . . . Lightly quitting the ground,

she floated past,—and suddenly raised both arms above her head. The head, and the arms, and the shoulders instantly flushed with warm, corporeal light; in the dark eyes quivered living sparks; a smile of mysterious delicacy flitted across the reddening lips. . . . A charming woman suddenly made her appearance before me. . . . But she instantly threw herself backward, as though falling into a swoon, and melted away like vapour.

I stood motionless.

When I came to my senses and looked about me, it seemed to me that the corporeal, pale-rosy flush which had coursed over the figure of my phantom had not yet vanished and, dispersed through the air, was flooding me on all sides. . . . It was the dawn flushing red. I suddenly became conscious of extreme fatigue and wended my way homeward. As I passed the poultry-yard I heard the first matutinal quacking of the goslings (no bird wakes earlier than they); along the roof, at the tip of each projecting stake, perched a daw; and all of them were diligently and silently pluming themselves, distinctly outlined against the milky sky. From time to time, they all rose into the air simultaneously and, after flying about a little while, alighted again in a row, without croaking. . . . From the forest near at hand was wafted, twice, the hoarsely-fresh cry of the black-cock, which had just flown up from the dewy grass all overgrown with

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berries. . . . With a light shiver all over my body, I gained my bed and speedily sank into a sound sleep.

XI

ON the following night, when I began to draw near to the ancient oak, Ellis floated to meet me, as to a friend. I was not afraid of her as on the preceding day; I was almost delighted to see her. I did not even attempt to understand what had happened with me: all I cared about was to fly as far as possible, through curious places.

Again Ellis's arm was wound about me—and again we darted off.

“Let us go to Italy,”—I whispered in her ear.

“Whithersoever thou wilt, my dear one,”—she replied solemnly and softly—and softly and solemnly she turned her face toward me. It seemed to me to be less transparent than on the day before; more feminine and more dignified; it reminded me of that beautiful creature who had flashed before my vision in the dawn before our parting.

“To-night is a great night,”—went on Ellis.—“It rarely comes,—only when seven times thirteen”

At this point I lost several words.

“Now that can be seen which is invisible at other times.”

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“ Ellis! ”—I pleaded,—“ who art thou? Tell me! ”

She silently raised her long, white hand.

In the dark heaven, at the point to which her finger pointed, in the midst of tiny stars, a comet gleamed in a reddish streak.

“ How am I to understand thee? ”—I began.—“ Dost thou mean that thou soarest like that comet, between the planets and the sun,—that thou soarest among men and how? ”

But Ellis's hand was suddenly clapped over my eyes. . . . Something akin to the grey mist from a damp valley enveloped me. . . .

“ To Italy! to Italy! ”—I heard her whisper.—“ This night is a great night! ”

XII

THE mist disappeared from before my eyes, and I beheld beneath me an interminable plain. But I was able to understand, from the very touch of the warm, soft air on my cheeks, that I was not in Russia; and neither did that plain resemble our Russian plains. It was a vast, dim expanse, apparently devoid of grass and empty; here and there, throughout its entire length, gleamed small stagnant pools, like tiny fragments of a mirror; far away the inaudible, motionless sea was visible. Great stars glittered in the intervals between the large, beautiful clouds; a thousand-voiced, un-

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ceasing, yet not clamorous trill, arose in all directions; and wonderful was that penetrating and dreamy rumble, that voice of the nocturnal desert. . . .

“The Pontine Marshes,”—said Ellis.—“Dost thou hear the frogs? Dost thou discern the odour of sulphur?”

“The Pontine Marshes” I repeated, and a sensation of majestic sadness took possession of me.—“But why hast thou brought me hither, to this mournful, deserted region? Let us rather fly to Rome.”

“Rome is close at hand,”—replied Ellis. . . .
“Prepare thyself!”

We descended and dashed along the ancient Roman road. A buffalo slowly raised from the ooze his shaggy, monstrous head with short whorls of bristles between the crooked horns which curved backward. He rolled the whites of his eyes sideways, and snorted heavily with his wet nostrils, as though he scented us.

“Rome, Rome is near,” whispered Ellis.—“Look, look ahead.”

I raised my eyes.

What was that which rose darkly against the night sky? The lofty arches of a huge bridge? What river did it span? Why was it rent in places? No, it was not a bridge, it was an ancient aqueduct. Round about lay the sacred land of Campania, and yonder, far away, were the Alban

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Hills; and their crests and the great back of the ancient aqueduct gleamed faintly in the rays of the moon which had just risen. . . .

We suddenly soared upward and hung suspended in the air before an isolated ruin. No one could have told what it had formerly been: a tomb, a palace, a tower. . . . Black ivy enveloped the whole of it with its deadly power—and below, a half-ruined arch yawned like jaws. A heavy, cellar-like odour was wafted in my face from that heap of small, closely-packed stones, from which the granite facing of the wall had long since fallen off.

“Here,”—said Ellis, raising her hand;—“here!—Utter loudly, thrice in succession, the name of a great Roman.”

“But what will happen?”

“Thou shalt see.”

I reflected.—“Divus Cajus Julius Cæsar!”—I suddenly exclaimed:—“Divus Cajus Julius Cæsar!” I repeated slowly:—“Cæsar!”

XIII

BEFORE the last echoes of my voice had had time to die away I heard. . . .

It is difficult to say precisely what. At first I heard a confused burst of trumpet notes and of hand-clapping, barely perceptible to the ear, but endlessly repeated. It seemed as though some-

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where, immensely far away, in some bottomless abyss, an innumerable throng were suddenly beginning to stir, and rise, rise, undulating and exchanging barely audible shouts, as though athwart a dream, athwart an oppressive dream many ages in duration. Then the air began to blow and darken above the ruin. . . . Shadows began to flit past me, myriads of shadows, millions of outlines, now rounded like helmets, now long like spears; the rays of the moon were shivered into many bluish sparks on these spears and helmets—and the whole of that army, that throng, moved nearer and nearer, grew greater, surged mightily. . . . An indescribable effort, a tense effort sufficient to lift the whole world, could be felt in it; but not a single figure stood out distinctly. . . . And suddenly it seemed to me as though a tremor ran through it all, as though certain huge billows had surged back and parted. . . . “Cæsar! Cæsar venit!”—rustled voices like the leaves of the forest upon which a whirlwind has suddenly descended . . . a dull shock surged along, and a pallid, stern head in a laurel wreath, with drooping lids,—the head of the emperor,—began slowly to move forward from the ruin. . . .

There are no words of mortal tongue to express the dread which gripped my heart. It seemed to me that if that head were to open its eyes, to unseal its lips, I should fall dead on the

spot.—“ Ellis!”—I moaned:—“ I do not wish it, I cannot, I do not want Rome, coarse, menacing Rome. . . . Away, away from here!”—“ Pusillanimous!”—she whispered, and we dashed headlong away. Once more I heard behind me the iron shout of the legions, like thunder now then all grew dark.

XIV

“ Look about thee,”—said Ellis to me,—“ and calm thyself.”

I obeyed; and I remember that my first impression was so sweet that I could only heave a sigh. Something smoky-blue, silvery-soft, encompassed me on every side. At first I could distinguish nothing: that azure splendour blinded me. But lo! little by little the outlines of beautiful mountains and forests began to start forth before me; a lake lay outspread before me, with stars quivering in its depths, and the caressing murmur of the surge. The fragrance of orange-blossoms enveloped me in a billow, and along with it, also in a billow, as it were, the strong, pure tones of a youthful feminine voice reached my ears. That fragrance, those sounds, fairly drew me downward, and I began to descend to descend to a luxurious marble palace, which gleamed white and in friendlywise amid a cypress grove, The sounds were welling forth from its wide-

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open windows; the waves of the lake, dotted with a dust of flowers, plashed against its walls—and directly opposite, all clothed in the dark-green of orange-trees and laurels, all bathed in radiant mist, all studded with statues, slender columns, and porticoes of temples, a circular island rose from the bosom of the lake. . . .

“Isola Bella!”—said Ellis. . . . “Lago Maggiore. . . .”

I articulated only: “Ah!” and continued to descend. The feminine voice rang out ever more loudly, ever more clearly in the palace; I was irresistibly drawn to it. . . . I wanted to gaze into the face of the songstress who was warbling such strains on such a night. We halted in front of a window.

In the middle of a room decorated in Pompeian style, and more resembling an ancient temple than the newest sort of a hall, surrounded by Greek statues, Etruscan vases, rare plants, precious stuffs, and lighted from above by the soft rays of two lamps enclosed in crystal globes, sat a young woman at the piano. With her head thrown slightly backward, and her eyes half-closed she was singing an Italian aria; she was singing and smiling, and, at the same time, her features were expressive of seriousness, even of severity a sign of complete enjoyment. She smiled and the Faun of Praxiteles, indolent, as young as she, effeminate, sensual

also, seemed to be smiling at her from one corner, from behind the branches of an oleander, athwart the thin smoke which rose from a bronze perfuming-pan upon an antique tripod. The beauty was alone. Enchanted by the sounds, the beauty, the glitter and perfume of the night, shaken to the very depths of my soul by the spectacle of that young, calm, brilliant happiness, I totally forgot my companion, forgot in what strange wise I had become a witness of that life which was so distant, so remote, so strange to me—and I wanted to step through the window, I wanted to enter into conversation. . . .

My whole body quivered from a forcible blow—as though I had touched a Leyden jar. I glanced round. . . . Ellis's face was gloomy and menacing, despite all its transparency; wrath glowed dully in her eyes, which had suddenly been opened to their full extent. . . .

“Away!”—she whispered furiously; and again there was the whirlwind and gloom and dizziness. . . . Only this time it was not the shout of the legions, but the voice of the songstress, broken short off on a high note, which lingered in my ears. . . .

We halted. A high note, that same high note, continued to ring out and did not cease to resound, although I felt an entirely different air, a different odour. . . . Invigorating freshness breathed upon me, as from a great river, and

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there was the scent of hay, of smoke, of hemp. The long-drawn note was followed by a second, then by a third, but with such an indubitable shading, such a familiar turn characteristic of my native land, that I immediately said to myself: "That is a Russian man singing a Russian song,"—and at that moment everything round about me grew clear.

XV

WE found ourselves above a flat shore. On the left, stretched out, losing themselves in infinity, lay mowed meadows, dotted with huge haystacks; on the right, to an equally unlimited extent, spread out the level expanse of a vast river abounding in water. Not far from the shores huge, dark barges were rocking quietly at anchor, slightly moving the tips of their masts like index-fingers. From one of these barges were wafted to me the sounds of a flowing voice, and on it burned lights, quivering and rocking in the water with their long, red reflections. Here and there both on the river and in the fields twinkled other lights—the eye was unable to discern whether near at hand or far away; now they blinked, again they stood forth in large, radiant spots; numberless katydids shrilled ceaselessly—quite equal to the frogs on the Pontine Marshes; and beneath the cloudless, but low-hanging, dark

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sky invisible birds uttered their calls from time to time.

“Are we in Russia?”—I asked Ellis.

“This is the Volga,”—she replied.

We soared along the bank.—“Why hast thou torn me thence, from that beautiful land?”—I began.—“Wert thou envious, pray? Did not jealousy awake in thee?”

Ellis's lips quivered faintly, and a menace again flashed in her eyes. . . . But her whole face immediately grew rigid once more.

“I want to go home,”—I said.

“Wait, wait,”—replied Ellis.—“To-night is a great night. It will not soon return. Thou mayest be the spectator. . . . Wait.”

And suddenly we flew across the Volga, in a slanting direction, close above the water, low and abruptly, like swallows before a storm. The broad waves gurgled heavily below us, the keen river wind beat us with its cold, strong wing . . . the lofty right shore soon began to rise before us in the semi-darkness. Steep hills with great clefts made their appearance. We approached them.

“Shout, ‘Tow-path men to the prow!’” Ellis whispered to me.

I remembered the dread which I had experienced at the appearance of the Roman spectres, I felt fatigue and a certain strange anguish, as though my heart were melting within me—and

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I did not wish to utter the fateful words. I knew beforehand that in reply to them something monstrous would appear, like Freischütz, in the Volga Valley.—But my lips parted against my will, and I shouted in a weak, strained voice: “ Tow-path men to the prow! ”¹

XVI

AT first all remained dumb, as before the Roman ruin.—But suddenly close to my very ear, a coarse bark-hauler’s² laugh rang out, and something fell with a bang into the water and began to choke. . . . I glanced round: no one was anywhere to be seen, but an echo rebounded from the shore, and instantly and from all quarters a deafening uproar arose. What was there not in that chaos of sounds! Shouts and whines; violent swearing and laughter, laughter most of all; strokes of oars and of axes; the crash as of breaking in doors and chests; the creaking of rigging and wheels, and the galloping of horses; the sound of alarm-bells and the clanking of chains; the rumble and roar of conflagrations, drunken songs and interchange of hurried speech; inconsolable, despairing weeping, and imperious ex-

¹ According to tradition, this was the war-cry of the Volga brigands when they captured vessels.—TRANSLATOR.

² Before the introduction of steamers on the Volga, all vessels were hauled up-stream from Ástrakhan to Nízхни-Nóvgorod—or even further—by men walking along the tow-paths on the shore.—TRANSLATOR.

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clamations; the death-rattle, and audacious whistling; the yelling and trampling of the dance. . . . "Beat! Hang! Drown! Cut his throat! That 's fine! That 's fine! So! Show no pity!"—were distinctly audible; even the broken breathing of panting men was audible;—and nevertheless, everywhere round about, as far as the eye could see, nothing came into sight, nothing underwent any change. The river flowed past mysteriously, almost morosely; the very shore seemed more deserted and wild than before—that was all.

I turned to Ellis, but she laid her finger on her lips. . . .

"Stepán Timoféitch! Stepán Timoféitch is coming!"—arose a rustling round 'about;—"our dear little father is coming, our atamán, our nourisher!"—As before, I saw no one, but it suddenly seemed to me as though a huge body were moving straight at me. . . . "Frólka! Where art thou, dog?"—thundered a terrible voice.—"Set fire on all sides—and put them under the axe, my little White-hands!"¹

The heat of a flame close at hand breathed upon me, and the bitter reek of smoke,—and at the same moment something warm, like blood, splattered upon my face and hands. . . . Wild laughter roared round about. . . .

¹The bandit chief, generally known in history as Sténka Rázin and Frol or Frólka, his younger brother and inseparable companion, captured and laid waste great stretches of the Volga. Their memory still lives in epic ballads and among the peasants.—TRANSLATOR.

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I lost consciousness, and when I recovered my senses, Ellis and I were slipping along the familiar verge of my forest, straight toward the old oak-tree. . . .

“Seest thou yonder path?”—Ellis said to me,—“yonder where the moon is shining dimly and two small birch-trees are bending over? . . . Dost thou wish to go thither?”

But I felt so shattered and exhausted, that in reply I could say only:—“Home. . . home!” . . .

“Thou art at home,”—answered Ellis.

In fact, I was standing in front of the door of my house—alone. Ellis had vanished. The watch-dog was about to approach, glared suspiciously at me—and fled howling.

With difficulty I dragged myself to my bed, and fell asleep, without undressing.

XVII

ON the following morning I had a headache, and could hardly move my feet; but I paid no attention to my bodily indisposition. I was gnawed by penitence, stifled with vexation.

I was extremely displeased with myself. “Pussillanimous!”—I kept repeating incessantly:—“Yes—Ellis is right. What did I fear? How could I fail to profit by the opportunity? . . . I might have beheld Cæsar himself—and I swooned with terror, I squealed, I turned away,

like a child from the rod. Well, Rázin—that is quite a different matter. In my quality of nobleman and land-owner However, what was the actual cause of my fright in that case also? Pusillanimous, pusillanimous!”

“But is it not in a dream that I am seeing all this?”—I asked myself at last. I called my housekeeper.

“Márfa, at what time did I go to bed last night?—dost thou remember?”

“Why, who knows, my benefactor. . . . Late, I think. In the gloaming thou didst leave the house; and thou were clattering thy heels in thy bedroom after midnight. Just before dawn—yes. And this is the third day it has been like that. Evidently, something has happened to worry thee.”

“Ehe-he!”—I thought.—“There can be no doubt as to the flying.”—“Well, and how do I look to-day?”—I added aloud.

“How dost thou look? Let me look at thee. Thy cheeks are somewhat sunken. And thou art pale, my nourisher; there now, there is n’t a drop of blood in thy face.”

I winced slightly. . . . I dismissed Márfa.

“If thou goest on like this thou wilt surely die or lose thy mind,”—I reasoned, as I sat meditating by the window. “I must abandon all this. It is dangerous. And, here now, how strangely my heart is beating! And when I am flying, it

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constantly seems to me as though some one were sucking it, or as though something were seeping out of it—like the spring sap from a birch, if you thrust an axe into it. And yet I feel sorry. And there is Ellis. . . . She is playing with me as a cat plays with a mouse but it is unlikely that she wishes any evil to me. I 'll surrender myself to her for the last time—I 'll gaze my fill—and then. . . . But what if she is drinking my blood? This is terrible. Moreover, such swift motion cannot fail to be injurious; they say that on the railways in England it is forbidden to go more than one hundred and twenty versts an hour. . . .”

Thus did I meditate—but at ten o'clock in the evening I was already standing before the aged oak.

XVIII

THE night was cold, dim, and grey; there was a scent of rain in the air. To my surprise, I found no one under the oak; I made the circuit of it several times, walked as far as the verge of the forest, and returned, staring assiduously into the darkness. . . . Everything was deserted. I waited a while, then uttered Ellis's name several times in succession, with ever-increasing loudness but she did not show herself. I was seized with sadness, almost with anguish; my for-

mer apprehensions vanished; I could not reconcile myself to the thought that my companion would never return to me.

“Ellis! Ellis! Do come! Wilt thou not come?”—I shouted for the last time.

A crow which had been awakened by my voice suddenly began to fidget about in the crest of a neighbouring tree, and becoming entangled in the branches, set to flapping its wings. . . . But Ellis did not appear.

With drooping head I wended my way homeward. Ahead of me the willows on the dam stood out in a black mass, and the light in the window of my room twinkled among the apple-trees of the garden,—twinkled and vanished, like the eye of a man watching me,—when suddenly the faint swish of swiftly-cloven air became audible behind me, and something with one swoop embraced and seized hold of me from below upward: that is the way a buzzard seizes, “smashes” a quail. . . . It was Ellis who had flown upon me. I felt her cheek on my cheek, the girdle of her arms around my body—and like a keen chill the whisper of her mouth pierced my ear: “Here am I!” I was simultaneously alarmed and delighted. . . . We floated off not far above the ground.

“Thou didst not mean to come to-day?”—I said.

“But thou didst languish for me! Thou lovest me? Oh, thou art mine!”

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Ellis's last words disconcerted me. . . . I did not know what to say.

"I was detained,"—she went on;—"they set a guard over me."

"Who could detain thee?"

"Whither dost thou wish to go?"—queried Ellis, not replying to my question, as usual.

"Carry me to Italy, to that lake—dost thou remember?"

Ellis drew back a little and shook her head in negation. Then for the first time did I perceive that she had ceased to be transparent. And her face seemed to have grown rosy; a crimson flush spread over its cloudy whiteness. I looked into her eyes and dread came upon me: in those eyes something was moving—with the slow, unceasing and vicious motion of a serpent which has coiled itself and, congealed in that position, is beginning to grow warm in the sunshine.

"Ellis!"—I exclaimed:—"Who art thou? Tell me, who art thou?"

Ellis merely shrugged her shoulders.

I was vexed. . . . I wanted to punish her;—and suddenly it occurred to me to order her to carry me to Paris. "That's where thou wilt have occasion for jealousy,"—I thought.—"Ellis!"—I said aloud;—"thou art not afraid of large cities, Paris, for example, art thou?"

"No."

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“No? Not even of those places where it is bright, as on the boulevards?”

“That is not the light of day.”

“Very good; then carry me immediately to the Boulevard des Italiens.”

Ellis threw over my head the end of her long, flowing sleeve. I was immediately enveloped in a sort of white mist, with a soporific scent of poppies. Everything disappeared instantaneously; all light, all sound—and almost consciousness itself. The sensation of life alone remained—and it was not unpleasant. Suddenly the mist vanished; Ellis had removed her sleeve from my head, and I beheld before me a huge mass of buildings crowded together, brilliancy, movement, din. . . . I beheld Paris.

XIX

I HAD been in Paris before, and therefore immediately recognised the spot to which Ellis had shaped her course. It was the garden of the Tuileries, with its aged chestnut-trees, iron fences, fortress-moat, and beast-like Zouaves on guard. Passing the palace, passing the Church of St. Roch, on whose steps the first Napoleon shed French blood for the first time, we halted high above the Boulevard des Italiens, where the third Napoleon did the same thing, and with equal success. Crowds of people—young and old

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dandies, workmen, women in sumptuous attire—were thronging the sidewalks; the gilded restaurants and cafés were blazing with lights, carriages of all sorts and aspects were driving up and down the boulevard; everything was fairly seething and glittering, in every direction, wherever the eye fell. . . . But, strange to say, I did not feel like quitting my pure, dark, airy height; I did not wish to approach that human ant-hill. It seemed as though a hot, oppressive, copper-coloured exhalation rose up thence, not precisely fragrant, nor yet precisely stinking; a very great deal of life had been collected there in one heap. I wavered. . . . But now the voice of a street-courtesan, sharp as the screech of iron rails, suddenly was wafted to my ear; like a naked blade it thrust itself out upward, that voice; it stung me like the fangs of a viper. I immediately pictured to myself the stony, greedy, flat Parisian face, with high cheek-bones, the eyes of a usurer, rouge, powder, curled hair, and a bouquet of bright-hued artificial flowers on the high-peaked hat, the scraped nails in the shape of claws, the monstrous crinoline. . . . I pictured to myself also a steppe-dweller like myself pursuing the venal doll with detestable tripping gait. . . . I pictured to myself how, confused to the point of rudeness, and lisping with his efforts, he endeavours to imitate in his manners the waiters at Véfour's, squeals, keeps on the alert, wheedles—

and a feeling of loathing took possession of me. . . . "No,"—I thought,—“Ellis will have no occasion to feel jealous here. . . .”

In the meantime, I noticed that we were beginning gradually to descend. . . . Paris rose to meet us with all its din and reek. . . .

“Halt!”—I turned to Ellis.—“Dost thou not find it stifling here, oppressive?”

“It was thou thyself who asked me to bring thee hither.”

“I was wrong, I recall my word. Carry me away, Ellis, I entreat thee. Just as I thought: yonder goes Prince Kulmamétoff, hobbling along the boulevard; and his friend Baráksin is waving his hand at him and crying: ‘Iván Stepánitch, *allons souper*, as quickly as possible, and engage Rigolbosch itself!’ Carry me away from these Mabilles and Maisons Dorés, away from fops, both male and female, from the Jockey Club and Figaro, from the closely-clipped soldiers’ heads and the polished barracks, from the *sergents de ville* with their goatees and the glasses of turbid absinthe, from the players of domino in the cafés and the gamblers on ’Change, from the bits of red ribbon in the buttonhole of the coat and the buttonhole of the overcoat, from Monsieur de Foi, the inventor of ‘the speciality of weddings,’ and from the free consultations of Dr. Charles Albert, from liberal lectures and governmental pamphlets, from Parisian comedies and

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Parisian operas and Parisian ignorance. . . .
Away! Away! Away!"

"Look down,"—Ellis answered me:—"thou art no longer over Paris."

I lowered my eyes. . . . It was a fact. A dark plain, here and there intersected by whitish lines of roads, was running swiftly past beneath us, and only behind, on the horizon, like the glow of a huge conflagration, the reflection of the innumerable lights of the world's capital throbbed upward.

XX

AGAIN a veil fell across my eyes. . . . Again I lost consciousness. It dispersed at last.

What was that yonder, below? What park was that with avenues of clipped lindens, isolated spruce-trees in the form of parasols, with porticoes and temples in the Pompadour taste, and statues of nymphs and satyrs of the Bernini school, and rococo Tritons in the centre of curving ponds, rimmed by low balustrades of blackened marble? Is it not Versailles? No, it is not Versailles. A small palace, also in rococo style, peers forth from clumps of curly oak-trees. The moon shines dimly, enveloped in a haze, and an extremely delicate smoke seems to be spread over the earth. The eye cannot distinguish what it is: moonlight or fog. Yonder on one of the ponds

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a swan is sleeping; its long back gleams white, like the snow of the steppes gripped by the frost, and yonder the glow-worms are burning like diamonds in the bluish shadow at the foot of the statues.

“We are close to Mannheim,”—said Ellis.—
“That is the Schwetzingen Park.”

“So we are in Germany,”—I thought, and began to listen. Everything was dumb; only somewhere a slender stream of falling water was splashing and babbling, isolated and invisible. It seemed to be repeating the same words over and over again: “Yes, yes, yes,” always “yes.” And suddenly it seemed to me as though in the very middle of one of the avenues, between the walls of shorn greenery, affectedly offering his arm to a lady in powdered coiffure and a gay-coloured farthingale, there stepped forth on his red heels a cavalier in a golden coat and lace cuffs, with a light, steel sword on his hip. . . . They were strange, pale figures. . . . I wanted to get a look at them. . . . But everything had vanished, and only the water babbled on as before.

“Those are dreams roaming abroad,”—whispered Ellis.—“Yesterday a great deal might have been seen—a great deal. To-day even dreams shun the eye of mortal man. On! On!”

We soared upward and flew further. So smooth and even was our flight that we did not seem to be moving, but everything, on the con-

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trary, appeared to be coming toward us. Mountains made their appearance, dark, undulating, covered with forests; they augmented and floated toward us. . . . Now they are already flowing past beneath us, with all their sinuosities, ravines, narrow meadows, with the fiery points in the slumbering villages along the swift rivers at the bottom of the valleys; and ahead of us again other mountains loom up and float past. . . . We are in the heart of the Schwarzwald.

Mountains, nothing but mountains and forest, the splendid, old, mighty forest. The night sky is clear; I can recognise every variety of tree; especially magnificent are the firs with their straight, white trunks. Here and there on the borders of the forests chamois are to be seen; stately and alert they stand on their slender legs and listen, with their heads finely turned, and their large, trumpet-shaped ears pricked up. The ruin of a tower sadly and blindly displays on a peak of naked crag its half-demolished battlements; above the ancient, forgotten stones a golden star glows peacefully. From a small, almost black lake, the moaning croak of tiny frogs rises up like a wail. I seem to hear other sounds, long, languid, like the sounds of a golden harp. . . . Here it is, the land of legend! That same delicate shimmer of moonlight which had impressed me at Schwetzingen is here disseminated everywhere, and the further the mountains stand apart

the thicker does that smoke become. I distinguish five, six, ten, different tones of the different layers of shadow on the slopes of the mountains, and over the silent diversity pensively reigns the moon. The air ripples on softly and lightly. I feel at ease and in a mood of lofty composure and melancholy as it were. . . .

“ Ellis, thou must love this land! ”

“ I love nothing. ”

“ How is that? And how about me? ”

“ Yes thee! ”—she replies indifferently.

It strikes me that her arm clasps my waist more closely than before.

“ On! On! ”—says Ellis, with a sort of cold enthusiasm.

“ On! ”—I repeat.

XXI

A MIGHTY fluctuating, ringing cry suddenly resounded overhead and was immediately repeated a little way in advance.

“ Those are belated cranes flying to your land, to the north, ”—said Ellis:—“ wouldst thou like to join them? ”

“ Yes, yes! raise me to them. ”

We soared upward and in the twinkling of an eye found ourselves alongside of the flock which had flown past.

The huge, handsome birds (there were thirty

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of them in all) were flying in a wedge form abruptly and rarely flapping their inflated wings. With head and legs intently ahead and breast thrust sternly forward, they were forging onward, and that so swiftly that the air whistled around them. It was wonderful to see such hot, strong life, such unflinching will, at such a height, at such a distance from all living things. Without ceasing triumphantly to plough their way through space the cranes exchanged calls, from time to time, with their comrades in the vanguard, with their leader; and there was something proud, dignified, something invincibly confident in those loud cries, in the conversation under the clouds. "We shall fly to our goal, never fear, however difficult it may be," they seemed to be saying, encouraging one another.

And at this point it occurred to me that there are very few people in Russia—why do I say in Russia?—in the whole world—like those birds.

"We are now flying to Russia,"—said Ellis. This was not the first time I had noticed that she almost always knew what I was thinking about.—
"Dost thou wish to return?"

"Let us return . . . or, no! I have been in Paris; take me to Petersburg."

"Now?"

"This instant. . . Only cover my head with thy veil or I shall become dizzy."

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Ellis raised her arm but before the mist enveloped me I felt on my lips the touch of that soft, dull sting. . . .

XXII

“AT-TE-E-E-E-ENTION!”—a prolonged cry resounded in my ears. “At-te-e-e-e-ention!” came the response, as though in despair, from the distance. “At-te-e-e-e-ention!” died away somewhere at the end of the world. I started. A lofty golden spire met my eye: I recognised the Peter-Paul Fortress.

A pale, northern night! Yes, but was it night? Was it not a pale, ailing day? I have never liked the Petersburg nights; but this time I was even terrified: Ellis’s form disappeared entirely, melted like the mist of morning in the July sun, and I clearly descried her whole body as it hung heavily and alone on a level with the Alexander column. So this was Petersburg! Yes, it really was. Those broad, empty, grey streets; those greyish-white, yellowish-grey, greyish-lilac, stuccoed and peeling houses with their sunken windows, brilliant sign-boards, iron pavilions over their porches, and nasty little vegetable-shops; those façades; those inscriptions, sentry-boxes, watering-troughs; the golden cap of St. Isaac’s Cathedral; the useless, motley Exchange; the granite walls of the fortress and the broken

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wooden pavement; those barks laden with hay and firewood; that odour of dust, cabbage, bast-matting and stables; those petrified yard-porters in sheepskin coats at the gates, those cab-drivers curled up in death-like sleep on their rickety carriages,—yes, it was she, our Northern Palmyra. Everything was visible round about; everything was clear, painfully clear and distinct; everything was sleeping mournfully, strangely heaped up and outlined in the dimly-transparent air. The glow of sunset—a consumptive glow—has not yet departed, and will not depart until morning from the white, starless sky. It lies on the silky surface of the Nevá, and the river barely murmurs and barely undulates as it hastens onward its cold, blue waters. . . .

“Let us fly away,”—pleaded Ellis.

And, without awaiting my answer, she bore me across the Nevá, across the Palace Square, to the Litéinaya. Footsteps and voices were audible below: along the street a cluster of young men were walking with drink-sodden faces and discussing dancing-classes. “Sub-lieutenant Stolpakóff the seventh!” suddenly cried out in his sleep a soldier, who was standing on guard at the pyramid of rusty cannon-balls,¹ and a little further on, at the open window of a tall house I caught sight of a young girl in a crumpled silk gown without sleeves, with a pearl net on her hair and a ciga-

¹ At the Artillery Barracks.—TRANSLATOR.

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rette in her mouth. She was devoutly perusing a book: it was the work of one of the most recent Juvenals.

“Let us fly on!”—I said to Ellis.

A minute more, and the little forests of decaying spruce-trees and mossy swamps which surround Petersburg were flitting past us. We directed our course straight for the south; sky and earth gradually grew darker and darker. The diseased night, the diseased day, the diseased city—all were left behind.

XXIII

WE flew more slowly than usual, and I was able to watch how the broad expanse of my native land unrolled before me like a series of interminable panoramas. Forests, bushes, fields, ravines, rivers—now and then villages and churches—and then again fields, and forests, and bushes, and ravines. . . . I grew melancholy,—and melancholy in an indifferent sort of way, somehow. And I was not melancholy and bored because we were flying over Russia in particular. No! The land itself, that flat surface which spread out beneath me; the whole earthly globe with its inhabitants, transitory, impotent, crushed by want, by sorrow, by diseases, fettered to a clod of contemptible earth; that rough, brittle crust, that excrescence on the fiery grain of sand of our planet, on which

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has broken out a mould dignified by us with the appellation of the organic, vegetable kingdom; those men-flies, a thousand times more insignificant than flies; their huts stuck together out of mud, the tiny traces of their petty, monotonous pother, their amusing struggles with the unchangeable and the inevitable,—how loathsome all this suddenly became to me! My heart slowly grew nauseated, and I did not wish to gaze any longer at those insignificant pictures, at that stale exhibition. . . Yes, I felt bored—worse than bored. I did not even feel compassion for my fellow-men: all emotions within me were drowned in one which I hardly venture to name: in a feeling of aversion; and that aversion was strongest of all and most of all toward myself.

“Stop,”—whispered Ellis:—“Stop, or I will not carry thee. Thou art becoming heavy.”

“Go home.”—I replied in the same sort of a tone with which I was accustomed to utter those words to my coachman on emerging, at four o’clock in the morning, from the houses of my Moscow friends with whom I had been discussing the future of Russia and the significance of the commune ever since dinner.—“Go home,”—I repeated, and closed my eyes.

XXIV

BUT I speedily opened them again. Ellis was pressing against me in a strange sort of way; she was almost pushing me. I looked at her, and the blood curdled in my veins. Any one who has chanced to behold on the face of another a sudden expression of profound terror the cause of which he does not suspect, will understand me. Terror, harassing terror, contorted, distorted the pale, almost obliterated features of Ellis. I have never beheld anything like it even on a living human face. A lifeless, shadowy phantom, a shadow and that swconing terror

“ Ellis, what ails thee? ”—I said at last.

“ ’T is she ’t is she. . . . ” she replied with an effort;—“ ’t is she! ”

“ She? Who is she? ”

“ Do not name her, do not name her,”—hurriedly stammered Ellis.—“ We must flee, or there will be an end to all—and forever. . . . Look: yonder! ”

I turned my head in the direction which she indicated to me with trembling hand,—and saw something something really frightful.

This something was all the more frightful because it had no definite form. Something heavy, gloomy, yellowish-black in hue, mottled like the belly of a lizard,—not a storm-cloud, and not

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smoke,—was moving over the earth with a slow, serpentine motion. A measured, wide-reaching undulation downward and upward,—an undulation which reminded one of the ominous sweep of the wings of a bird of prey, when it is in search of its booty; at times an inexpressibly revolting swooping down to the earth,—that is the way a spider swoops down to the captured fly. . . . Who art thou, what art thou, threatening mass? Under its influence—I saw it, I felt it—everything was annihilated, everything grew dumb. . . . A rotten, pestilential odour emanated from it—and a chill that caused the heart to grow sick, and made things grow dark before the eyes, and the hair to stand on end. It was a power which was advancing;—the power which cannot be resisted, to which all are subject, which, without sight, without form, without thought, sees everything, knows everything, and like a bird of prey chooses out its victims, like a serpent crushes them and licks them with its chilly sting. . . .

“ Ellis! Ellis! ”—I shrieked like a madman.—
“ That is Death! Death itself! ”

The wailing sound which I had already heard, burst from Ellis's mouth—this time it bore more resemblance to a despairing, human scream—and we dashed away. But our flight was strange and frightfully uneven; Ellis kept turning somersaults in the air; she fell downward, she threw herself from side to side, like a partridge which

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is mortally wounded, or which is desirous of luring the hound away from her brood. And yet, long, wavy offshoots, separating themselves from the inexpressibly-dreadful mass, rolled after us, like outstretched arms, like claws. . . . The huge form of a muffled figure on a pale horse rose up for one moment, and soared up to the very sky. . . . Still more agitatedly, still more despairingly did Ellis throw herself about. "She has seen me! All is over! I am lost!" . . . her broken whisper became audible. "Oh, unhappy one that I am! I might have enjoyed, I might have acquired life . . . but now . . . Annihilation, annihilation!"

This was too unbearable. . . . I lost consciousness.

XXV

WHEN I came to myself I was lying prone upon the grass, and felt a dull pain all through my body, as though from a severe injury. Dawn was breaking in the sky: I was able to distinguish objects clearly. Not far away, along the edge of a birch-coppice, ran a road fringed with willows; the surroundings seemed familiar to me. I began to recall what had happened to me,—and I shuddered all over, as soon as the last, monstrous vision recurred to my mind. . . .

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“But of what was Ellis afraid?” I thought. “Can it be possible that she also is subject to *its* power? Can it be that she is not immortal? Can it be that she is doomed to annihilation, to destruction? How is that possible?”

A soft moan resounded close at hand. I turned my head. Two paces distant from me lay, outstretched and motionless, a young woman in a white gown, with dishevelled hair and bared shoulders. One arm was thrown up over her head, the other fell upon her breast. Her eyes were closed, and a light crimson foam had burst forth upon the closely-compressed lips. Could that be Ellis? But Ellis was a phantom, while I beheld before me a living woman. I approached her, bent over. . . .

“Ellis? Is it thou?”—I exclaimed. Suddenly, with a slow quiver, the broad eyelids were lifted; dark, piercing eyes bored into me—and at that same moment the lips also clung to me, warm, moist, with a scent of blood the soft arms wound themselves tightly round my neck, the full, burning bosom was pressed convulsively to mine.—“Farewell! Farewell forever!”—a dying voice articulated distinctly,—and everything vanished.

I rose to my feet staggering like one intoxicated, and passing my hands several times across my face, I gazed attentively about me. I was close to the *** highway, a couple of versts from

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my manor-house. The sun had already risen when I reached home.

ALL the following nights I waited—and not without terror, I admit—for the appearance of my phantom; but it did not visit me again. I even went one day, in the twilight, to the old oak-tree; but nothing unusual occurred there either. I did not grieve overmuch, however, at the cessation of the strange friendship. I pondered much and long over this incomprehensible, almost inexplicable affair—and I became convinced that not only is science unable to elucidate it, but that even in the fairy-tales, the legends, there is nothing of the sort to be encountered! What was Ellis, as a matter of fact? A vision, a wandering soul, an evil spirit, a sylph, a vampire? Sometimes it seemed to me once more that Ellis was a woman whom I had formerly known, and I made strenuous efforts to recall where I had seen her. . . . There now, there,—it sometimes seemed to me,—I shall recall it directly, in another moment. . . . In vain! again everything deliquesced like a dream. Yes, I pondered a great deal, and as was to be expected, I arrived at no conclusion. I could not make up my mind to ask the advice or opinion of other people, for I was afraid of gaining the reputation of a madman. At last I have cast aside all my surmises: to tell the truth, I am in no mood for them. On the one hand, the

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Emancipation has taken place, with its division of arable land, and so forth, and so on; on the other hand, my health has failed; my chest has begun to pain me, I am subject to insomnia, and have a cough. My whole body is withering away. My face is yellow as that of a corpse. The doctor declares that I have very little blood, and calls my malady by a Greek name—"anæmia"—and has ordered me to Gastein. But the Arbiter of the Peace¹ fears that he "will not be able to deal with" the peasants without me. . . .

So you see how matters stand!

But what signify those keen, piercingly-clear sounds,—the sounds of a harmonica,—which I hear as soon as people begin to talk to me about any one's death? They grow ever louder and more piercing. . . . And why do I shudder in such torturing anguish at the mere thought of annihilation?

¹ An official who was appointed after the Emancipation to arbitrate differences of opinion as to the division of the land between the landed proprietors and the serfs.—TRANSLATOR.

YÁKOFF PÁSYNKOFF

(1855)

YÁKOFF PÁSYNKOFF

I

IT happened in Petersburg, in winter, on the first day of the carnival-week. I had been invited to dine by one of my boarding-school comrades, who had borne the reputation in his youth of being a pretty girl, and had later on turned out a man who was not in the least bashful. He is dead now, like the majority of my comrades. In addition to myself, Konstantín Alexándrovitch Asánoff, and a literary celebrity of the day had promised to come to dinner. The literary celebrity kept us waiting for him, and at last sent word that he would not come, but in his stead a small, fair-haired gentleman presented himself,—one of those everlasting unbidden guests in which Petersburg abounds.

The dinner lasted a long time; the host did not spare his wine, and our heads gradually got heated. Everything that each one of us had concealed in his soul—and who has not something concealed in his soul?—came out. The host's face suddenly lost its modest and reserved ex-

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pression; his eyes began to glitter insolently, and an insipid grin distorted his lips; the fair-haired gentleman began to laugh in a pitiful sort of way, with a stupid whine; but Asánoff surprised me most of all. That man had always been distinguished for a sense of decorum; but on this occasion he suddenly began to pass his hand across his brow, to put on airs, and to brag of his powerful connections, incessantly making mention of some uncle of his, a very influential man. . . . I decidedly failed to recognise him; he was openly jeering at us . . . he almost expressed his contempt for our society. Asánoff's insolence enraged me.

"See here,"—I said to him:—"if we are so insignificant in your eyes, march off to your influential uncle. But perhaps he does not admit you to his presence?"

Asánoff made me no reply, and continued to draw his hand across his brow.

"And what sort of folks are these!"—he said again.—"Why, they never go in any decent society, they are n't acquainted with a single well-bred woman, while I,"—he exclaimed, drawing from his side-pocket a wallet, and banging the table with it,—"*have here a whole bunch of letters from a young girl whose like you will not find in all the world!*"

The host and the fair-haired gentleman paid no heed to Asánoff's last words; they were clutching each other by the button,—and both of them

were narrating some story; but I pricked up my ears.

“Well, you are bragging in good sooth, Mr. Nephew of an important personage!”—I said, moving closer to Asánoff:—“you have n’t any letters, whatsoever.”

“You think so?”—he retorted, glancing loftily down upon me.—“What ’s this, then?”—He opened the wallet, and showed me about half a score of letters addressed to him. . . . “The handwriting is familiar!”—I thought. . . .

I feel the flush of shame start out on my cheeks my self-love suffers acutely. . . . What possesses me to confess so ignoble a deed? But there is no help for it. I knew when I began my tale that I should be forced to blush to the very ears. So, then, summoning up all my forces, I am bound to confess that

Here is the point: I took advantage of Asánoff’s tipsy condition, and when he carelessly flung the letters on the table-cloth, which was drenched with champagne (my own head was buzzing pretty hard, too), I swiftly ran my eye over one of the letters. . . .

My heart sank within me. . . . Alas! I myself was in love with the young girl who had been writing to Asánoff, and now I could no longer cherish any doubt that she loved him. The whole letter, which was written in French, breathed forth tenderness, devotion. . . .

“*Mon cher ami Constantin!*”—that was the

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way it began . . . and it wound up with the words: "be cautious, as of yore, and I will be yours or no one's."

Stunned, as though by a clap of thunder, I sat motionless for a few moments, but recovered myself at last, sprang to my feet, and rushed from the room. . . .

A quarter of an hour later I was in my own lodgings.

THE Zlotnítzky family was one of the first with which I had become acquainted after my removal from Moscow to Petersburg. It consisted of father, mother, two daughters, and a son. The father, already a grey-haired but still fresh man, formerly in the army, occupied a rather important post, spent the morning at his service, slept after dinner, and in the evening played cards at the club. . . . He was rarely at home, he conversed little and reluctantly, gazed askance from under his brows in a manner which was not precisely surly nor yet precisely indifferent, and never read anything except books of travel and geographies, and when he was ill he coloured pictures, having locked himself in his study, or teased the old grey parrot Pópka. His wife, an ailing and consumptive woman, with sunken black eyes and a sharp nose, never quitted her couch for days together, and was always embroidering cushions on canvas; so far as I was able to observe,

she was afraid of her husband, exactly as though she were culpable toward him in some way. The eldest daughter, Varvára, a plump, rosy, chestnut-haired girl, eighteen years of age, was perpetually sitting at the window and scrutinising the passers-by. The son was being educated in a government institution, made his appearance at home only on Sunday, and was not fond of wasting words for nothing either; even the younger daughter, Sófya, the young girl with whom I fell in love, was of a taciturn disposition. Silence always reigned in the Zlotnítzkys' house; only Pópka's piercing screams broke it; but visitors speedily became accustomed to it, and again felt the burden and oppression of that eternal silence weighing upon them. However, visitors rarely looked in at the Zlotnítzkys': it was tiresome there. The very furniture, the red wallpaper, with yellowish patterns, in the drawing-room; the multitude of chairs, with plaited seats, in the dining-room; the faded worsted pillows, with representations of young girls and dogs, on the divans; the horned lamps and gloomy portraits, on the walls—all inspired an involuntary melancholy, all emitted a cold, sour sort of atmosphere. On reaching Petersburg, I had regarded it as my duty to call upon the Zlotnítzkys: they were distantly related to my mother. With difficulty did I sit out the hour, and for a long time I did not return; but gradually I took to going

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more and more frequently. I was attracted by Sófyá, whom I had not liked at first, and with whom I ultimately fell in love.

She was a girl of short stature, almost gaunt, with a pale face, thick, black hair, and large, brown eyes, which were always half-closed. Her features, which were regular and sharp-set, especially her tightly-compressed lips, expressed firmness and force of will. At home she was called a girl with character. . . . “She resembles her eldest sister, Katerína,”—said Madame Zlotnítzky one day, when she was sitting alone with me (she never ventured to refer to that Katerína in her husband’s presence).—“You do not know her; she is in the Caucasus, married. At the age of thirteen,—just imagine it!—she fell in love with the man who is now her husband, and then announced to us that she would marry no one else. Do what we would,—nothing was of any avail! She waited until she was twenty-three, enraged her father,—and married her idol all the same. It would be the easiest thing in the world for a catastrophe to happen with Sónetchka also! May the Lord preserve her from such stubbornness! But I ’m apprehensive for her; she is only sixteen, but already it is impossible to control her. . . .”

Mr. Zlotnítzky entered; his wife immediately fell silent.

Strictly speaking, Sófyá did not attract me by

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her force of will—no; but, with all her dryness, and lack of animation and imagination, she possessed the charm of straightforwardness, honourable sincerity, and spiritual purity. I respected her as much as I loved her. . . . It seemed to me that she was well-inclined toward me; it was painful to me to be undeceived as to her attachment, to become convinced of her love for another.

The unexpected discovery which I had made astounded me all the more, because Mr. Asánoff visited the Zlotnítzkys' house infrequently, much more rarely than I did, and showed no particular preference for Sófya. He was a handsome, dark-complexioned man, with expressive, although rather heavy features, prominent, brilliant eyes, a large, white brow, and plump, red little lips beneath a delicate moustache. He bore himself very modestly, but rigorously, talked and pronounced judgment with self-confidence, and held his peace with dignity. It was obvious that he thought a great deal of himself. Asánoff laughed rarely, and that through his teeth, and he never danced. He was very badly built. He had once served in the *** regiment, and had borne the reputation of an active officer.

“Strange!”—I reflected, as I lay on my divan:—“why have I not noticed anything of this?” The words of Sófya's letter suddenly recurred to my mind.—“Ah!”—I thought:—“that 's it! What a crafty little girl! And I had thought

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her frank and sincere. . . . Well, just wait, and I 'll show you!”

But at this point, so far as I can recall the circumstances, I fell to weeping bitterly, and could not get to sleep until morning.

ON the following day, at two o'clock, I set out for the Zlotnítzkys'. The old man was not at home, and his wife was not sitting in her accustomed place; her head had begun to ache after she had eaten pancakes,¹ and she had gone to lie down in her bedroom. Varvára was standing with her shoulder leaning against the window, and staring into the street; Sófya was pacing to and fro in the room, with her arms folded across her breast; Pópka² was shrieking.

“Ah! good morning!”—said Varvára, languidly, as soon as I entered the room, and immediately added, in an undertone: “yonder goes a man with a tray on his head. . . .” (She had a habit of making remarks about the passers-by, occasionally, and as though to herself.)

“Good morning,”—I replied.—“Good morning, Sófya Nikoláevna. And where is Tatyána Vasílievna?”

¹ Pancakes, served with melted butter and caviare (never with sweet syrup), are the principal feature of the Russian “butter-week” or carnival-tide, and are seldom or never eaten at any other time.—TRANSLATOR.

² Equivalent to Polly, in the case of parrots.—TRANSLATOR.

“She has gone to lie down,”—replied Sófya, continuing to pace the room.

“We had pancakes,”—remarked Varvára, without turning round.—“Why did n’t you come? . . . Where is that clerk going?”

“I had no time.”—(“Po-li-ice!” yelled the parrot, harshly.)—“How your Pópka does screech to-day!”

“He always screeches like that,”—said Sófya.

We all maintained silence for a while.

“He has turned in at the gate,”—said Varvára, suddenly climbing on the window-sill and opening the hinged pane.

“What art thou about?”—inquired Sófya.

“A beggar,”—replied Varvára, bent down, picked up a copper five-kopék piece, on which the ashes of a fumigating pastile still rose in a mound, flung the coin into the street, slammed to the pane, and jumped heavily to the floor. . . .

“I passed the time very pleasantly last night,”—I began, as I seated myself in an arm-chair:—“I dined with a friend; Konstantín Alexándritch was there. . . .” (I looked at Sófya; she did not even contract her brows.)—“And, I must confess,”—I went on,—“that we got rather convivial; the four of us drank eight bottles.”

“You don’t say so!”—calmly ejaculated Sófya, shaking her head.

“Yes,”—I went on, slightly nettled by her in-

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difference;—"and do you know what, Sófya Nikoláevna,—'t is not without reason that the proverb says that when the wine is in the truth comes out."

"How so?"

"Konstantín Alexándritch made us laugh greatly. Just picture to yourself: he suddenly took to passing his hand across his forehead like this, and saying: 'What a fine, dashing fellow I am! I have an uncle who is a distinguished man. . . .'"

"Ha, ha!"—rang out Varvára's short, abrupt laugh. . . . "Pópka, pópka, pópka!" rattled the parrot in response.

Sófya halted in front of me, and looked into my face.

"And what did you say?"—she asked:—"don't you remember?"

I blushed involuntarily.

"I don't remember! I must have been in a fine state also. As a matter of fact,"—I added, with significant pauses:—"it is a dangerous thing to drink wine; the first you know, you babble secrets, and say that which no one ought to know. You will repent afterward, but then it is too late."

"And did you babble secrets?"—inquired Sófya.

"I 'm not talking about myself."

Sófya turned away, and again began to walk up and down the room. I gazed at her, and raged

inwardly. "Just look at you,"—I said to myself,—"you 're a baby, a mere child, yet what control you have over yourself! You 're like a stone, simply. But just wait a bit. . . ."

"Sófya Nikoláevna" I said aloud.

Sófya stood still.

"What do you want?"

"Will not you play something on the piano? By the way, I have something to tell you,"—I added, lowering my voice.

Sófya, without uttering a word, went into the hall; I followed her. She stopped beside the piano.

"What shall I play for you?"—she asked.

"What you please . . . a nocturne by Chopin."

Sófya began the nocturne. She played rather badly, but with feeling. Her sister played only polkas and waltzes, and that rarely. She would lounge up to the piano, with her lazy gait, seat herself, drop the burnous from her shoulders to her elbows (I never saw her without a burnous), start up a polka thunderously, fail to finish it, begin another, then suddenly heave a sigh, rise and return to the window. A strange being was that Varvára.

I sat down beside Sófya.

"Sófya Nikoláevna,"—I began, gazing intently at her askance:—"I must impart to you a bit of news which is very disagreeable to me."

"News? What is it?"

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“ This. . . . Up to this time I have been mistaken in you, utterly mistaken.”

“ How so? ”—she returned, continuing to play, and fixing her eyes on her fingers.

“ I have thought that you were frank; I have thought that you did not know how to be crafty, to be sly. . . . ”

Sófya put her face close to her music. . . .

“ I don’t understand you.”

“ But the principal thing is,”—I went on:—“ that I could not possibly imagine, that you, at your age, were already capable of playing a part in so masterly a manner. . . . ”

Sófya’s hands trembled slightly on the keys.

“ What are you saying? ”—she said, still without looking at me:—“ I am playing a part? ”

“ Yes, you.” (She laughed. . . . Fierce wrath took possession of me.) “ You feign to be indifferent to a certain man and . . . and you write letters to him,”—I added in a whisper.

Sófya’s cheeks blanched, but she did not turn toward me; she played the nocturne to the end, rose, and shut the lid of the piano.

“ Where are you going? ”—I asked, not without confusion.—“ You will not answer me? ”

“ What answer have I to make to you? I don’t know what you are talking about. . . . And I don’t know how to dissemble.”

She began to put the music together. . . .

The blood flew to my head.

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“Yes, you do know what I am talking about,”
—I said, rising also:—“and if you like, I will immediately remind you of several expressions in one of those letters:—‘be cautious as of yore.’ . . . ”

Sófya gave a slight start.

“I had not in the least expected this from you,”
—she said at last.

“And I had not in the least expected,”—I interposed,—“that you, Sófya Nikoláevna, deigned to bestow your attention upon a man who”

Sófya turned swiftly toward me; I involuntarily retreated a pace; her eyes, always half-closed, were so widely opened that they appeared huge, and sparkled angrily under her brows.

“Ah! In that case,”—said she,—“you must know that I love that man, and that your opinion of him and of my love for him is a matter of perfect indifference to me. And where did you get the idea? What right have you to say that? And if I have made up my mind to anything”

She stopped short, and swiftly left the room.

I remained. I suddenly felt so awkward and conscience-stricken, that I covered my face with my hands. I comprehended all the impropriety, all the baseness of my conduct, and panting with shame and penitence, I stood like one branded

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with disgrace. “My God!”—I thought:—
“what have I done?”

“Antón Nikítitch,”—the maid’s voice became audible in the anteroom,—“please get a glass of water as quickly as possible for Sófya Nikoláevna.”

“Why, what’s the matter?”—asked the butler.

“I think she’s weeping. . . .”

I gave a start, and went into the drawing-room to get my hat.

“What were you talking about with Sónetchka?”—Varvára asked me indifferently, and after a brief pause, she added in an undertone:—“there goes that notary’s clerk again.”

I began to take my leave.

“Where are you going? Wait, mamma will come out of her room directly.”

“No; I can’t now,”—said I:—“it would be better for me to return some other time.”

At that moment, to my terror,—precisely that,—to my terror, Sófya entered the drawing-room with firm steps. Her face was paler than usual, and her eyelids were slightly red. She did not even glance at me.

“Look, Sófya,”—said Varvára:—“some clerk or other keeps walking about our house.”

“Some spy or other,” remarked Sófya, coldly and scornfully.

This was too much! I departed, and, really, I do not remember how I got home.

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I was very heavy at heart, more heavy and bitter than I can describe. Two such cruel blows in the space of four-and-twenty hours! I had learned that Sófya loved another, and had forever forfeited her respect. I felt myself so annihilated and put to shame, that I could not even be indignant with myself. As I lay on the divan, with my face turned to the wall, I was surrendering myself with a sort of burning enjoyment to the first outbursts of despairing anguish, when I suddenly heard footsteps in the room. I raised my head and beheld one of my most intimate friends—Yákoff Pásynkoff.

I was ready to fly into a passion with any man who entered my room that day, but never could I be angry with Pásynkoff; on the contrary, in spite of the grief which was devouring me, I inwardly rejoiced at his coming, and nodded to him. According to his wont, he strode up and down the room a couple of times, grunting and stretching his long limbs, stood silently for a little while, in front of me, and silently seated himself in one corner.

I had known Pásynkoff a very long time, almost from childhood. He had been reared in the same private boarding-school, kept by a German named Winterkeller, in which I had spent three years. Yákoff's father, a poor, retired major, a very honourable man, but somewhat unhinged mentally, had brought him, an urchin of

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seven years, to this German, paid a year's tuition in advance, had gone away from Moscow, and vanished, without leaving a trace. From time to time dark, strange rumours concerning him arrived. Only after the lapse of seven years was it learned with certainty that he had been drowned in a freshet, as he was crossing the Irtýsh. What had taken him to Siberia, the Lord only knows. Yákoff had no other relatives. So he remained on Winterkeller's hands. It is true that Yákoff had one distant relative,—an aunt, who was so poor, that at first she was afraid to go to see her nephew, lest they should cast him on her shoulders. Her alarm proved to be unfounded; the kind-hearted German kept Yákoff with him, permitted him to learn with the other pupils, fed him (but they passed him over at dessert on week-days), and made over clothing for him from the camelot morning-gowns (chiefly snuff-coloured) of his mother, a very aged, but still alert and active Lifyand¹ woman. The result of all these circumstances, and the result of Yákoff's inferior position in the boarding-school was, that his comrades treated him slightly, looked down on him, and called him sometimes "woman's wrapper," sometimes "the mob-cap's nephew" (his aunt constantly wore a very queer cap, with a tuft of yellow ribbons in the shape of an artichoke, sticking out at the top), sometimes "the

¹ Livonia. — TRANSLATOR.

son of Yermák¹ (because his father had been drowned in the Irtysh). But, in spite of these nicknames, in spite of his absurd garments, in spite of his extreme poverty, they all loved him greatly, and it was impossible not to love him; a kinder, more noble soul never existed on earth, I think. He also studied extremely well.

When I saw him for the first time, he was sixteen years of age, while I had just passed my thirteenth birthday. I was an extremely conceited and spoiled urchin, had been reared in a fairly wealthy home, and therefore when I entered the boarding-school I made haste to get intimate with a certain little Prince, the object of Winterkeller's special solicitude, and with two or three other small aristocrats, while I put on pompous airs with all the rest. I did not even deign to notice Pásynkoff. That long, awkward young fellow, in his hideous round-jacket and short trousers, from beneath which peeped thick, knitted thread stockings, seemed to me something in the nature of a page-boy from the house-serfs' class, or the son of a petty burgher. Pásynkoff was very polite and gentle to everybody, although he fawned on no one; if they repulsed him, he did not humble himself, and did not sulk, but held himself aloof, as though grieving and waiting. Thus did he behave with me also. About two months

¹The conqueror of Siberia, in the reign of Iván the Terrible. He was drowned (1584) while trying to swim the Irtysh.—TRANSLATOR.

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elapsed. One clear summer day, as I was passing from the courtyard into the garden, after a noisy game of ball, I saw Pásynkoff sitting on a bench, under a tall lilac-bush. He was reading a book. I cast a glance, in passing, at the cover, and read on the back the title: "Schiller's Werke." I stopped short.

"Do you know German?"—I asked Pásynkoff. . . .

To this day I feel mortified, when I recall how much scorn there was in the sound of my voice. . . . Pásynkoff gently raised his small but expressive eyes to mine, and answered:

"Yes, I do; do you?"

"I should think so!"—I retorted, already affronted; and was on the point of proceeding on my way, but something kept me back.

"And what in particular are you reading from Schiller?"—I inquired with as much haughtiness as before.

"I am now reading 'Resignation'; it is a very beautiful poem. I'll read it to you if you like—shall I? Sit down here beside me, on the bench."

I hesitated a little, but sat down. Pásynkoff began to read. He knew German much better than I did; he was obliged to explain to me the sense of several lines; but I was no longer ashamed either of my ignorance, or of his superiority to myself. From that day forth, from that reading together in the garden, in the shade of the

lilac-bush, I loved Pásynkoff with all my soul; I got intimate with him, I submitted wholly to him.

I vividly recall his personal appearance at that epoch. However, he changed very little afterward. He was tall, thin, long-bodied, and decidedly clumsy. His narrow shoulders and sunken chest gave him a sickly aspect, although he had no reason to complain of his health. His large head, arched on top, was inclined slightly on one side, his soft, chestnut hair hung in thin locks around his thin neck. His face was not handsome, and might even appear ridiculous, thanks to his long, thick and reddened nose, which seemed to hang over his broad, straight lips; but his open brow was very fine, and when he smiled, his small, grey eyes beamed with such gentle and affectionate good-nature, that everyone felt warm and blithe at heart, from merely looking at him. I recall his voice, also, soft and even, with a peculiarly agreeable hoarseness. He talked little, as a general thing, and with obvious difficulty; but when he grew animated his speech flowed freely and,—strange to say!—his voice grew even softer, his glance seemed to retreat within and become extinguished, and his whole face flushed faintly. In his mouth the words: “good,” “truth,” “life,” “science,” “love,” never had a false ring, no matter how enthusiastically he uttered them. He entered into the realm of the ideal without a strain, without an

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effort; his chaste soul was ready at all times to present itself before "the shrine of beauty"; it waited only for the greeting, the touch of another soul. . . . Pásynkoff was a romanticist, one of the last romanticists whom I have chanced to meet. The romanticists, as every one knows, have died out now; at all events, there are none among the young people of the present day. So much the worse for the young people of the present day!

I spent about three years with Pásynkoff, soul to soul, as the saying is. I was the confidant of his first love. With what grateful attention and sympathy did I listen to his avowal! The object of his passion was Winterkeller's niece, a fair-haired pretty little German, with a plump, almost childish little face, and trustful, tender blue eyes. She was very kind-hearted and sentimental, loved Mattieson, Uhland, and Schiller, and recited their verses very agreeably, in her timid, melodious voice. Pásynkoff's love was of the most platonic sort; he saw his beloved only on Sunday (she came to play at forfeits with the Winterkeller children) and talked very little with her; on the other hand, one day, when she said to him, "*Mein lieber, lieber Herr Jacob!*" he could not get to sleep all night from excess of happiness. It never entered his head then, that she said "*mein lieber*" to all his comrades. I remember, too, his grief and dejection, when the news suddenly spread

abroad, that Fräulein Frederika (that was her name), was going to marry Herr Kniftus, the owner of a rich meat-shop, and marry solely out of obedience to her parents' wishes, but not for love. That was a difficult time for Pásynkoff, and he suffered especially on the day when the newly-wedded pair made their first call. The former Fräulein, now already Frau Frederika, introduced him again by the name of "*lieber Herr Jacob*," to her husband, everything about whom was glistening: his eyes, and his black hair curled into a crest, and his forehead, and his teeth, and the buttons on his dress-suit, and the chain on his waistcoat, and the very boots on his decidedly large feet, whose toes were pointed outward. Pásynkoff shook hands with Herr Kniftus, and wished him (and wished it sincerely—I am convinced of that) full and long-continued happiness. This took place in my presence. I remember with what surprise and sympathy I gazed at Yákoff then. He seemed to me a hero! . . . And afterward, what sad conversations took place between us!—"Seek consolation in art,"—I said to him.—"Yes,"—he answered me,—"*and in poetry.*"—"And in friendship,"—I added.—"*And in friendship,*"—he repeated. Oh, happy days! . . .

It was painful to me to part from Pásynkoff! Just before my departure, he finally got his papers, and entered the university, after long wor-

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rying and trouble, and a correspondence which was often amusing. He continued to exist at Winterkeller's expense, but in place of the camelot round-jackets and trousers, he received the customary clothing in return for lessons in various subjects, which he gave to the younger pupils. Pásynkoff never changed his mode of conduct to me to the very end of my stay in the boarding-school, although the difference in our ages had already begun to tell, and I, I remember, had begun to be jealous of several of his new comrade-students. His influence on me was of the most beneficial nature. Unfortunately, it was not of long duration. I will cite one instance only. In my childhood, I had a habit of lying. . . . In Yákoff's presence my tongue never turned to falsehood. But especially delightful to me was it to stroll with him, or to pace by his side to and fro in the room, and listen to him recite verses in his quiet, concentrated voice, without glancing at me. Really, it seemed to me then, that he and I were gradually leaving the earth behind us and soaring away into some radiant, mysteriously-beautiful region. . . . I remember one night. He and I were sitting under the same lilac-bush: we had grown fond of the spot. All our comrades were already asleep; but we had risen softly, dressed ourselves by the sense of feeling, in the dark, and stealthily gone out "to dream awhile." It was quite warm out of doors,

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but a chilly little breeze blew in gusts now and then, and made us nestle up closer to each other. We talked, we talked a great deal, and with fervour, so that we even interrupted each other, although we were not wrangling. In the sky shone myriads of stars. Yákovf raised his eyes, and, pressing my hand closely, softly exclaimed:

“ Above us
Lies Heaven with its eternal stars. . . .
And above the stars is their Creator. . . .”

A devout tremor coursed through me; I turned cold all over, and sank down on his shoulder. . . . My heart was filled to overflowing. . . .

Where are those raptures now? Alas! in the place where youth is also.

I encountered Yákovf in Petersburg eight years later on. I had just obtained a position in the government service, and some one had got him a petty post in some department or other. Our meeting was of the most joyous character. Never shall I forget that moment when, as I was sitting at home one day, I suddenly heard his voice in the anteroom. . . . How I started, with what a violent beating of the heart did I spring to my feet and throw myself on his neck, without giving him time to take off his fur coat and unwind his scarf! How eagerly did I gaze at him athwart bright, involuntary tears of delight! He had aged somewhat in the course of the last seven

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years; wrinkles, fine as the trace of a needle, had furrowed his brow here and there, his cheeks had grown slightly sunken, but his beard had hardly increased at all in thickness, and his smile remained the same as of yore, and his laugh, his charming, inward laugh, which resembled a drawing-in of the breath, was the same as ever. . . .

Great heavens! what was there that we did not talk over that day! How many favourite poems we recited to each other! I began to urge him to come and live with me, but he would not consent; but, on the other hand, he promised to come to see me every day, and he kept his promise.

And Pásynkoff had not changed in soul, either. He presented himself before me the same romanticist as I had formerly known him. In spite of the way in which life's chill, the bitter chill of experience, had gripped him, the tender flower, which had blossomed early in the heart of my friend had retained all its pristine beauty. No sadness, no pensiveness even, were perceptible in him: as of old, he was gentle, but ever blithe in soul.

He lived in Petersburg as in a desert, taking no heed for the future, and consorting with hardly any one. I made him acquainted with the Zlotnítzkys. He called on them with tolerable frequency. Without being conceited, he was not shy: but with them, as everywhere else, he talked little, although he liked them. The heavy old

man, Tatyána Vasílievna's husband, even treated him affectionately, and both the taciturn girls speedily got used to him.

He would come bringing with him, in the back pocket of his overcoat, some newly-published work, and take a long time to make up his mind to read it, but keep twisting his neck to one side, like a bird, and peering to see whether it were possible; and, at last, he would ensconce himself in a corner (he was fond, in general, of sitting in corners), pull out the book, and set to reading aloud, now and then interrupting himself with brief comments or exclamations. I noticed that Varvára was more given to sitting down beside him and listening than her sister was, although, of course, she did not understand him clearly: literature did not interest her. She would sit opposite Pásynkoff, with her chin propped on her hands, and gaze,—not into his eyes, but into his whole face,—and not give utterance to a single word, but merely heave a sudden, noisy sigh.—In the evening, we played at forfeits, especially on Sundays and feast-days. We were then joined by two young ladies, sisters, distant relatives of the Zlotnítzkys,—small, plump girls, and frightful gigglers; also by several cadets and yunkers, very quiet, good-natured lads. Pásynkoff always seated himself beside Tatyána Vasílievna, and helped her devise what the person who drew the forfeit should do.

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Sófya was not fond of the caresses and kisses with which forfeits are usually redeemed, while Varvára was vexed when she was compelled to hunt up anything or guess a riddle. The young ladies giggled incessantly,—heaven knows what about,—and I was sometimes seized with vexation when I looked at them, while Pásynkoff merely smiled and shook his head. Old Zlotnítzky took no part in our games, and even glowered at us in none too gracious wise from behind the door of his study. Once only, quite unexpectedly, did he come out to us, and suggest that the person whose forfeit was drawn should waltz with him; of course, we assented. Tatyána Vasílievna's forfeit was drawn; she flushed all over, grew confused and shy as a fifteen-year-old girl,—but her husband immediately bade Sófya to seat herself at the piano, stepped up to his wife, and took a couple of turns with her, in old-fashioned style, in three-time. I remember how his sallow, dark face, with unsmiling eyes, now appeared, now disappeared, as he revolved slowly, and without altering his stern expression. In waltzing he took long steps, and skipped, while his wife took quick little steps and pressed her face to his breast, as though in terror. He led her to her seat, made his bow to her, went off to his own room, and locked himself in. Sófya was on the point of rising. But Varvára begged her to continue the waltz, stepped up to Pásynkoff, and,

extending her hand, said with an awkward grin: "Will you?" Pásynkoff was astounded, but sprang to his feet nevertheless,—he was always distinguished for his refined courtesy,—took Varvára round the waist, but slipped at the very first step, and hastily freeing himself from his lady, rolled straight under the pedestal on which stood the parrot's cage. . . . The cage fell, the parrot was frightened, and began to shriek: "Po-li-iice!" A universal roar of laughter rang out. . . . Zlotnítzky made his appearance on the threshold of his study, gave a surly stare, and clapped to the door. From that time forth, all that was necessary was to allude to this incident in Varvára's presence, and she would forthwith begin to laugh, with an expression on her face, as she glanced at Pásynkoff, which seemed to say that nothing more clever than what he had done on that occasion could possibly be devised.

Pásynkoff was extremely fond of music. He frequently asked Sófyá to play something for him, seated himself a little apart, and listened, from time to time chiming in with his thin voice on the tender notes. He was especially fond of Schubert's "The Constellations." He declared that when "The Constellations" was played in his presence, it always seemed to him as though, along with the sounds, some long, sky-blue rays poured down from on high, straight into his breast. To this day, at the sight of the

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cloudless sky at night, with its softly-twinkling stars, I always recall that melody of Schubert and Pásynkoff. . . . A certain stroll in the suburbs also recurs to my mind. The whole company of us had driven out in two double-seated, hired carriages, to Párgolovo.¹ I remember that we got the carriages in Vladímir street; they were very old, light-blue in colour, mounted on round springs, with broad boxes for the coachmen, and tufts of hay inside; the dark-bay, broken-winded horses drew us along at a ponderous trot, each limping on a different foot. For a long time we roamed through the pine groves surrounding Párgolovo, drank milk from earthen jugs, and ate strawberries and sugar. The weather was splendid. Varvára was not fond of walking much: she soon wearied; but on this occasion she did not lag behind us. She took off her hat, her hair fell out of curl, her heavy features grew animated, and her cheeks flushed crimson. On encountering two peasant maidens in the forest, she suddenly seated herself on the ground, called them to her, and did not caress them, but made them sit down beside her. Sófya stared at them from afar with a cold smile, and did not approach them. She was walking with Asánoff, while Zlotnítzky remarked that Varvára was a

¹ A Finnish village, situated a little more than ten miles north of St. Petersburg. There are many summer villas, and numbers of the former dwellings of the Finns have been converted into summer residences by literary and artistic people. — TRANSLATOR.

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regular setting hen. Varvára rose and walked on. In the course of the stroll she approached Pásynkoff several times and said to him: "Yákoff Ivánitch, I have something to say to you,"—but what she wanted to say to him remained a secret.

However, it is high time for me to return to my story.

I WAS delighted at Pásynkoff's arrival; but I recalled what I had done on the preceding day; I felt inexpressibly conscience-stricken, and hastily turned my face to the wall again. After waiting awhile, Yákoff asked me if I were well.

"Yes,"—I replied through my teeth:—"only, my head aches."

Yákoff made no reply, and picked up a book. More than an hour passed; I was already on the point of making a clean breast of the whole thing to Yákoff . . . when, suddenly, the bell in the anteroom began to ring.

The door on the staircase opened. . . I listened. . . . Asánoff was asking my man whether I was at home.

Pásynkoff rose; he did not like Asánoff, and whispering to me that he would go and lie down on my bed, he betook himself to my sleeping-room.

A minute later, Asánoff entered.

From his flushed face, from his curt and dry

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bow alone, I divined that he had not come to me for any ordinary call. "What 's in the wind?" I thought.

"My dear sir,"—he began, swiftly seating himself in an arm-chair,—“I have presented myself to you for the purpose of having you solve for me a certain doubt.”

"What is it, precisely?"

"This: I wish to know whether you are an honourable man?"

I flared up.

"What does this mean?"—I asked.

"This is what it means," he returned, pronouncing each word with clear-cut distinctness: "Yesterday evening I showed you a wallet containing the letters of a certain person to me. . . . To-day you have repeated to that person with reproach,—observe, with reproach,—several expressions from those letters, without having the slightest right to do so. I wish to know how you will explain this?"

"And I wish to know, what right *you* have to catechise me?"—I replied, trembling all over with rage and inward shame.—“Why did you brag of your uncle, of your correspondence? What had I to do with that? All your letters are intact, are n't they?"

"The letters are intact; but I was in such a condition last night that you might easily have"

"In short, my dear sir,"—I interposed, inten-

tionally speaking as loudly as I could,—“ I request you to leave me in peace, do you hear? I don't want to know anything about it, and I shall explain nothing to you. Go to that person for explanations!” (I felt my head beginning to reel.)

Asánoff darted at me a glance to which he, obviously, endeavoured to impart an expression of sneering penetration, plucked at his moustache, and rose without haste.

“ I know now what I am bound to think,”—said he:—“ your face is the best proof against you. But I must observe to you that well-bred persons do not behave in this manner. . . . To read a letter by stealth, and then to go to a well-born young girl and worry her is”

“ Go to the devil!”—I shouted, stamping my foot:—“ and send your second to me; I have no intention of discussing the matter with you.”

“ I beg that you will not instruct me,”—retorted Asánoff, coldly:—“ and I was intending to send my second to you.”

He went away. I fell back on the divan, and covered my eyes with my hands. Some one touched me on the shoulder; I removed my hands—in front of me stood Pásynkoff.

“ What is this? Is it true?” . . . he asked me.—“ Hast thou read another person's letter?”

I had not the strength to answer him, but nodded my head affirmatively.

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Pásynkoff walked to the window, and, standing with his back to me, said slowly: "Thou hast read a letter from a young girl to Asánoff. Who is the girl?"

"Sófya Zlotnítzky,"—I replied, as a condemned man answers his judge.

For a long time Pásynkoff did not utter a word.

"Passion alone can excuse thee, to a certain extent,"—he began, at last.—"Art thou in love with Miss Zlotnítzky?"

"Yes."

Again Pásynkoff held his peace for a while.

"I thought so. And to-day thou didst go to her and begin to upbraid her. . . ."

"Yes, yes, yes" I said in desperation.—
"Now thou mayest despise me. . . ."

Pásynkoff paced up and down the room a couple of times.

"And does she love him?"—he asked.

"She does. . . ."

Pásynkoff dropped his eyes, and stared for a long time immovably at the floor.

"Well, this must be put right,"—he began, raising his head:—"things cannot be left like this."

And he picked up his hat.

"Whither art thou going?"

"To Asánoff."

I sprang from the divan.

"But I will not permit thee. Good heavens! how canst thou do so? ! What will he think?"

Pásynkoff cast a glance at me.

"And is it better, in thy opinion, to let his folly proceed, to ruin thyself, and disgrace the girl?"

"But what wilt thou say to Asánoff?"

"I shall try to bring him to his senses; I shall say that thou dost beg his pardon. . . ."

"But I won't beg his pardon!"

"Thou wilt not? Art not thou guilty?"

I looked at Pásynkoff: the calm and stern though sad expression of his face impressed me; it was a new one to me. I made no reply, and sat down on the divan.

Pásynkoff left the room.

With what torturing anguish did I wait his return! With what cruel sluggishness did the time pass! At last he returned—late.

"Well, how are things?"

"God be thanked!"—he replied.—"Everything is made up."

"Hast thou been to Asánoff?"

"I have."

"Well, how about him? He made wry faces, I suppose,"—I said with an effort.

"No, I will not say that. I expected more. . . . He . . . is not the vulgar man I had thought him."

"Well, and hast thou not been to see any one except him?"—I asked, after waiting a little.

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“ I have been to see the Zlotnítzkys.”

“ Ah!” (My heart began to beat violently. I did not dare to look Pásynkoff in the eye.) —“ Well, and how about her?”

“ Sófya Nikoláevna is a sensible girl, a kind-hearted girl. . . . Yes, she is a good girl. At first it was awkward for her, but afterward she recovered her composure. However, our entire conversation did not last more than five minutes.”

“ And didst thou tell her everything about me?”

“ I told her what was necessary.”

“ Henceforth, I shall not be able to go to see them!” —I said dejectedly. . . .

“ Why not? Yes, yes; thou mayest occasionally. On the contrary, thou must call on them, without fail, lest they should imagine something. . . .”

“ Akh, Yákoff, thou wilt despise me now!” —I exclaimed, hardly restraining my tears.

“ I? Despise thee?” . . . (His affectionate eyes warmed up with love.) —“ Despise thee stupid man! Was it easy for thee, pray? Didst not thou suffer?”

He extended his hand to me; I rushed to him and fell, sobbing, on his neck.

AFTER the lapse of several days, in the course of which I was able to observe that Pásynkoff was very much out of sorts, I finally made up my

mind to call on the Zlotnítzkys. It would be difficult to convey in words what I felt when I entered their drawing-room. I remember that I could barely distinguish faces, and that my voice broke in my throat. And Sófyá was no more at ease than I was: she evidently forced herself to converse with me, but her eyes avoided mine just as my eyes avoided hers, and in her every movement, in her whole being, there peered forth constraint, mingled with . . . why conceal the truth? . . . with a secret repulsion. I endeavoured as speedily as possible, to free both her and myself from such painful sensations. This meeting was, happily, the last . . . before her marriage. A sudden change in my fate took me to the other end of Russia, and I bade farewell for a long time to Petersburg, to the Zlotnítzky family, and, what was more painful to me than all else, to kind Yákoff Pásynkoff.

II

SEVEN years elapsed. I do not consider it necessary to relate precisely what happened to me in the course of all that time. I wore myself out with travelling all over Russia; I went into the wilds and the remote parts—and, thank God! the wilds and the remote parts are not so dreadful as some people think, and in the most hidden nooks of the forest, dreaming in primeval dense-

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ness, under fallen trees and thickets, grow fragrant flowers.

One day in spring, as I was passing, on business connected with the service, through the small county town of one of the remote Governments of eastern Russia, through the dim little window of my tarantás I caught sight of a man on the square, in front of a shop,—a man whose face seemed extremely familiar to me. I took a second look at this man and, to my no small delight, recognised in him Elisyéi, Pásynkoff's servant.

I immediately ordered my postilion to halt, sprang out of the tarantás, and approached Elisyéi.

“Good morning, brother!”—I said, with difficulty concealing my agitation:—“art thou here with thy master?”

“Yes,”—he replied slowly, then suddenly cried out:—“Akh, dear little father, is it you? And I did n't recognise you!”

“Art thou here with Yákov Ivánitch?”

“I am, dear little father, I am. . . . And with whom else should I be?”

“Lead me to him as speedily as possible.”

“Certainly, certainly! This way, please, this way. . . . We are stopping here in the inn.”

And Elisyéi conducted me across the square, incessantly repeating: “Well, and how delighted Yákov Ivánitch will be!”

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This Elisyéi, of Kalmýk extraction, a man of extremely hideous and even fierce aspect, but the kindest of souls, and far from stupid, was passionately attached to Pásynkoff, and had been in his service for ten years.

“How is Yákoff Ivánitch’s health?”—I asked him.

Elisyéi turned toward me his small, dark-yellow face.

“Akh, dear little father, ’t is bad . . . bad, dear little father! You will not recognise him. . . . I don’t believe he has long to live in this world. That’s the reason we settled down here, for we were on our way to Odessa for the cure.”¹

“Whence come you?”

“From Siberia, dear little father.”

“From Siberia?”

“Just so, sir. Yákoff Ivánitch has been in the service there. And it was there he received his wound, sir.”

“Has he been in the military service?”

“Not at all, sir. He was in the civil service, sir.”

“What marvels are these?!” I thought. In the meantime, we had drawn near the inn, and Elisyéi ran on ahead to announce me. During the first years of our separation, Pásynkoff and I had written to each other pretty frequently, but

¹ The famous salt-water and mud baths in the vicinity of Odessa.—TRANSLATOR.

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I had received his last letter four years previous to this, and from that time onward had known nothing about him.

“Please come in, sir; please come in, sir!”—Elisyéi shouted to me from the staircase:—“Yákoff Ivánitch is very anxious to see you, sir.”

I ran hastily up the rickety stairs, entered a dark little room—and my heart sank within me. . . . On a narrow bed, under his uniform cloak, pale as death, lay Pásynkoff, stretching out to me his bare, emaciated hand. I rushed to him and clasped him in a convulsive embrace.

“Yásha!”—I cried at last:—“What ails thee?”

“Nothing,”—he replied in a weak voice.—“I am not very well. How in the world do you come to be here?”

I sat down on a chair beside Pásynkoff’s bed and, without releasing his hands from mine, I began to gaze into his face. I recognised the features which were so dear to me: the expression of his eyes and his smile had not changed, but how sickness had altered him!

He noticed the impression which he produced on me.

“I have not shaved for three days,”—he said:—“well, and my hair is not brushed either, but otherwise I . . . I ’m all right.”

“Tell me, please, Yásha,”—I began:—“what

is this Elisyéi has been telling me. . . . Thou art wounded?"

"Ah! yes; that 's a whole history in itself,"—he replied.—"I 'll tell thee about that later on. I really was wounded, and just fancy by what? An arrow."

"An arrow?"

"Yes, an arrow; only not the mythological one, not the dart of love, but a real arrow made from some extremely supple wood, with an artful sharp tip on the end. . . . Such an arrow produces a very unpleasant sensation, especially when it lands in the lungs."

"But how did it happen? Good gracious. . . ."

"This way. As thou knowest, there has always been a great deal that was ridiculous about my fate. Dost thou remember my comical correspondence in connection with demanding my papers? Well, and so I was wounded in an absurd way also. And, as a matter of fact, what well-bred man, in our enlightened century, permits himself to deal wounds with an arrow? And not accidentally—observe, not during some games or other, but in conflict."

"Yes; but still thou dost not tell me. . . ."

"Here now, wait a bit,"—he interrupted.—"Thou knowest that shortly after thy departure from Petersburg, I was transferred to Nówgorod. I spent quite a long time in Nówgorod, and, I must confess that I was bored, although I did

meet there a certain being. . . .” (He heaved a sigh) “But there ’s no time to go into that now; but a couple of years ago a splendid little post fell to my lot, a trifle distant, ’t is true, in the Government of Irkútsk, but what ’s the harm in that! Evidently, it was written in my father’s fate and in mine that we should visit Siberia. A glorious land is Siberia! Rich and fertile, as any one will tell you. I liked it very much there. The natives of foreign stock were under my authority; a peaceable folk; but to my misfortune a score of their men, no more, took it into their heads to smuggle contraband goods. I was sent to seize them. So far as seizing them is concerned, I effected that, but one of them, out of caprice, it must have been, tried to defend himself, and treated me to that arrow. . . . I came near dying, but recovered. And now here I am on my way to make a final cure. . . The authorities have given the money,—may God grant them all health!”

Pásynkoff, completely exhausted, dropped his head on the pillow, and ceased speaking. A faint flush spread over his cheeks. He closed his eyes.

“He cannot talk much,”—said Elisyéi, who had not left the room, in an undertone.

“Here now,”—he went on, opening his eyes:—
“I must have caught cold. The local district doctor is attending me,—thou wilt see him; he appears to know his business. But I am glad it

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has happened, because, otherwise, how could I have met thee?" (And he clasped my hand. His hand, which shortly before had been as cold as ice, was now burning hot.)—"Tell me something about thyself,"—he began again, throwing his cloak off his breast:—"for God knows when we shall see each other again."

I hastened to comply with his wish, if only to prevent his talking, and began my narration. At first he listened to me with great attention, then asked for a drink, then began to close his eyes again and to throw his head about on the pillow. I advised him to take a little nap, adding that I would not proceed further until he should recover, and would establish myself in the adjoining room.

"Things are very wretched here," Pá-synkoff was beginning; but I stopped his mouth and softly left the room. Elisyúi followed me out.

"What 's the meaning of this, Elisyúi? Why, he is dying, is n't he?"—I asked the faithful servant.

Elisyúi merely waved his hand in despair, and turned away.

Having dismissed my postilion, and hastily established myself in the adjoining room, I went to see whether Pásynkoff had fallen asleep. At his door I collided with a tall, very fat and heavy man. His puffy, pock-marked face expressed in-

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dolence—and nothing else, his tiny eyes were all but closed, and his lips glistened as though after sleep.

“Allow me to inquire,”—I asked him, “whether you are not the doctor?”

The fat man looked at me, after having, with an effort elevated his overhanging forehead with his eyebrows.

“I am, sir,” he said at last.

“Will not you do me the favour to come this way to my room, doctor? I think Yákoff Ivánitch is asleep at present. I am his friend, and I should like to have a talk with you about his malady, which causes me great anxiety.”

“Very good, sir,”—replied the doctor, with an expression which seemed to say: “What in the world possesses you to talk so much? I would have gone any way,” and followed me.

“Tell me, please,”—I began, as soon as he had dropped down on a chair: “is my friend’s condition dangerous? What do you think?”

“Yes,”—calmly replied the fat man.

“And . . . is it very critical?”

“Yes, it is.”

“So that he may even . . . die?”

“Yes.”

I must confess that I gazed at my interlocutor almost with hatred.

“Good gracious!”—I began: “then we must resort to some measures, call a consultation, or

something. . . . Why, things cannot be left in this condition. . . . Good heavens!"

"A consultation?—That can be done. Why not? We might call in Iván Efrémitch. . . ."

The doctor spoke with difficulty, and sighed incessantly. His belly heaved visibly, when he spoke, as though ejecting every word with an effort.

"Who is Iván Efrémitch?"

"The town doctor."

"Would n't it be better to send to the capital of the government—what think you? There certainly must be good physicians there."

"Why not? We might do that."

"And who is considered to be the best physician there?"

"The best? There was a Dr. Kohlrabus there only, I—I rather think he has been transferred somewhere else. However, I must confess that there is no necessity for sending."

"Why not?"

"Even the governmental doctor cannot help your friend."

"Is it possible that he is as bad as that?"

"Yes, exactly that; he's done for."

"What, in particular, is his ailment?"

"He has received a wound. . . . The lungs have been injured, you know. . . . Well, and then he has caught cold, and fever has set in well, and so forth. . . . And he has no reserve force. A

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man can't recover without reserve force, as you know yourself."

We both remained silent for a while.

"We might try homeopathy,"—said the fat man, darting a sidelong glance at me.

"Homeopathy? Why, you are an allopath, are you not?"

"Well, and what if I am an allopath! Do you think I don't know about homeopathy? Just as well as anybody. Our apothecary here gives homeopathic treatment, and he has no learned degree."

"Well!"—I said to myself: "things are in a bad way! . . . No, doctor," I said: "you had better treat him by your usual method."

"As you like, sir."

The fat man rose, and heaved a sigh.

"Are you going to him?"—I inquired.

"Yes; I must take a look at him."

And he left the room.

I did not follow him. It was more than my strength would bear to see him at the bedside of my poor friend. I called my man and ordered him to drive immediately to the capital of the government, and inquire there for the best physician, and bring him, without fail. There came a rapping in the corridor; I opened the door quickly.

The doctor had already come out of Pásynkoff's room.

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“Well, how is he?”—I asked in a whisper.

“All right; I have prescribed a potion.”

“I have decided, doctor, to send to the government town. I do not doubt your skill; but you know yourself that two heads are better than one.”

“Very well, that ’s laudable!”—returned the fat man, and began to descend the stairs. Evidently, I bored him.

I went to Pásynkoff.

“Hast thou seen the local Æsculapius?”—he asked me.

“Yes,”—I replied.

“What I like about him,”—remarked Pásynkoff,—“is his wonderful composure. A doctor ought to be phlegmatic, ought n’t he? That is very encouraging for the patient.”

As a matter of course, I did not attempt to persuade him to the contrary.

Toward evening, contrary to my anticipations, Pásynkoff felt more at ease. He requested Elisyéi to prepare the samovár, announced that he was going to treat me to tea, and would drink a cup himself, and he was perceptibly more cheerful. Nevertheless, I endeavoured to prevent his talking; and perceiving that he was absolutely determined not to be quiet, I asked him if he did not wish me to read something aloud to him.

“As we used to do at Winterkeller’s—dost thou remember?”—he replied: “Certainly, with

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pleasure. What shall we read? Look over my books, yonder on the window-sill. . . .”

I went to the window and took up the first book which came to hand. . . .

“What is that?”—he asked.

“Lérmontoff.”

“Ah, Lérmontoff! Very good indeed! Púshkin is higher, of course. . . . Dost thou remember: ‘Again the storm-clouds over me have gathered in the gloom,’ . . . or: ‘For the last time thine image dear, I dare caress in mind.’ Akh, how wonderfully fine! wonderfully fine! But Lérmontoff is good also. Come here, brother, take and open the book at haphazard, and read!”

I opened the book and was disconcerted; I had hit upon “The Testament.” I tried to turn over the leaf, but Pásynkoff noticed my movement, and said hastily: “No, no, no! Read where it opened.”

There was no help for it; I read “The Testament.”

“A splendid thing!”—remarked Pásynkoff, as soon as I had uttered the last line.—“A splendid thing! But it is strange,”—he added, after a brief pause,—“it is strange that thou shouldst have hit upon ‘The Testament,’ of all things. . . . Strange!”

I began to read another poem, but Pásynkoff did not listen to me, gazed to one side, and repeated “strange!” a couple of times more.

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I dropped the book on my knees.

“ ‘They have a little neighbour,’ ”—he whispered, and suddenly turning to me, he asked: “Dost thou remember Sófya Zlotnítzky?”

I flushed scarlet.

“How can I help remembering?!”

“She married, did n’t she?” . . .

“Yes; she married Asánoff, long ago. I wrote thee about that.”

“Exactly, exactly so, thou didst write. Did her father forgive her in the end?”

“Yes; but he would not receive Asánoff.”

“The stubborn old man! Well, and what dost thou hear about it? Do they live happily?”

“I really do not know. . . . I think they do. They are living in the country, in the *** Government; I have not seen them; but I have driven past.”

“And have they children?”

“I believe so. . . By the way, Pásynkoff?”—I asked.

He glanced at me.

“Confess,—I remember that thou wouldst not answer my question at the time; thou didst tell her that I was in love with her, didst thou not?”

“I told her everything, the whole truth. . . I always spoke the truth to her. To have concealed anything from her would have been a sin!”

Pásynkoff ceased speaking.

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“Come, tell me,”—he began again: “didst thou get over thy love for her promptly or not?”

“Not very promptly; but I did get over it. What ’s the use of sighing in vain?”

Pásynkoff turned his face toward me.

“But I, my dear fellow,”—he began, and his lips quivered,—“am no match for thee; I have n’t got over my love for her to this day.”

“What!”—I exclaimed with inexpressible amazement.—“Wert thou in love with her?”

“I was,”—said Pásynkoff, slowly, raising both hands to his head.—“How I loved her God alone knows. I never spoke of it to any one in the world, and never meant to mention it to any one . . . but it has come out! ‘I have but a brief while to live in this world,’ they say. . . . So it does not matter!”

Pásynkoff’s unexpected confession astounded me to such a degree that I was positively unable to utter a word, and merely thought: “Is it possible? how is it that I did not suspect this?”

“Yes,”—he went on, as though talking to himself:—“I loved her. I did not cease to love her, even when I learned that her heart belonged to Asánoff. But it pained me to learn that! If she had fallen in love with thee, I would, at all events, have rejoiced on thy account; but Asánoff. . . . How could he please her? It was his luck! And she was not able to be unfaithful to her feeling,

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to cease to love him. An honourable soul does not change. . . .”

I recalled Asánoff’s visit after the fatal dinner, Pásynkoff’s intervention, and involuntarily clasped my hands.

“Thou didst learn all that from me, poor fellow!”—I exclaimed:—“and thou didst take it upon thyself to go to her, nevertheless!”

“Yes,”—said Pásynkoff:—“that explanation with her—I shall never forget it. It was then I learned, it was then I understood the meaning of the motto I had long before chosen for myself: ‘Resignation.’ But she still remained my constant dream, my ideal. . . . And pitiable is he who lives without an ideal!”

I glanced at Pásynkoff; his eyes seemed to be fixed on the distance, and blazed with a feverish gleam.

“I loved her,”—he went on:—“I loved her, her, quiet, honourable, inaccessible, incorruptible; when she went away, I became nearly crazed with grief. . . . I have never loved any one since. . . .”

And suddenly, turning round, he pressed his face to his pillow, and fell to weeping softly.

I sprang to my feet, bent over him, and began to comfort him. . . .

“Never mind,”—he said, raising his head, and shaking back his hair:—“I did n’t mean to do it. I feel rather sad, rather sorry for myself, that is to say. . . . But it is of no conse-

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quence. The poetry is to blame for it all. Read me some other poems—something more cheerful.”

I took up Lérmontoff, and began hastily to turn over the leaves; but, as though expressly, I kept hitting upon poems which might again agitate Pásynkoff. At last I read him “The Gifts of the Terek.”

“Rhetorical crackling!”—remarked my poor friend, in the tone of an instructor:—“but there are good places! I tried my hand at poetry myself, my dear fellow, in thine absence, and began a poem: ‘The Beaker of Life,’—but it came to nothing! my business, brother, is to sympathise, not to create. . . . But I feel tired, somehow; I believe I had better take a nap—what dost thou think? What a splendid thing sleep is, when you come to think of it! All our life is a dream, and the best thing in it is sleep.”

“And poetry?”—I asked.

“Poetry is a dream also, only a dream of paradise.”

Pásynkoff closed his eyes.

I stood for a while beside his bed. I did not think that he could get to sleep quickly; but his breathing became more even and prolonged. I stole out of the room on tiptoe, returned to my own chamber, and lay down on the divan. For a long time I reflected on what Pásynkoff had told me, recalled many things, marvelled, and, at last, fell asleep myself. . . .

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Some one nudged me: before me stood Elisyéi.

“Please come to my master,”—he said.

I rose at once.

“What is the matter with him?”

“He is delirious.”

“Delirious? And he has not been so before?”

“Yes; he was delirious last night also; but somehow it is dreadful to-night.”

I entered Pásynkoff's room. He was not lying on his bed, but sitting up, with his whole body bent forward, softly throwing his hands apart, smiling and talking—talking incessantly in a weak, toneless voice, like the rustling of reeds. His eyes were wandering. The melancholy light of the night-taper, placed on the floor, and screened by a book, lay in a motionless patch on the ceiling; Pásynkoff's face looked paler than ever in the half gloom.

I went up to him, called him by name—he did not reply. I began to listen to his mumblings: he was raving about Siberia, about its forests. At times there was sense in his ravings.

“What trees!”—he whispered: “they reach to the very sky. How much hoar-frost there is on them! Silver. . . . Snow-drifts. . . . And yonder are little tracks a hare has leaped along, or a white ermine. . . . No, it is my father who has run past with my papers. Yonder he is! . . . Yonder he is! I must go; the moon is shining. I must go and find my papers. . . .

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Ah, a flower, a scarlet flower—Sófya is there. . . . There, little bells are ringing, oh, it is the frost ringing. . . . Akh, no; it is the stupid bull-finches hopping in the bushes, and whistling. . . . See the red-breasted warblers! It is cold. . . . Ah! there is Asánoff. . . . Akh, yes, he is a cannon, you know—a brass cannon, and his gun-carriage is green. That is why he pleases people. Was that a shooting-star? No, it is an arrow flying. . . . Akh, how swiftly, and straight at my heart! . . . Who is that shooting? Thou, Sónetchka?”

He bent his head and began to whisper incoherent words. I glanced at Elisyéi; he was standing with his hands clasped behind his back, and gazing compassionately at his master.

“Well, my dear fellow, hast thou become a practical man?”—he suddenly inquired, fixing on me a glance so clear, so full of intelligence, that I gave an involuntary start, and was on the point of answering, but he immediately went on:—“But I, brother, have not become a practical man, I have not done that which thou wilt do! I was born a dreamer, a dreamer! Dreams, dreams. . . . What is a dream? Sobakévitch’s peasant,—that ’s what a dream is. Okh!”

Pásynkoff raved until nearly daylight; at last, he quieted down a little, sank back on his pillow, and fell into a doze. I returned to my own room.

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Exhausted by the cruel night, I fell into a heavy slumber.

Again Elisyéi awakened me.

“Akh, dear little father!”—he said to me in a trembling voice:—“I believe Yákovf Ivánitch is dying. . . .”

I ran to Pásynkoff. He was lying motionless. By the light of the dawning day, he already looked like a corpse. He recognised me.

“Farewell,”—he whispered:—“remember me to her, I am dying. . . .”

“Yásha!”—I cried:—“don’t say that! Thou wilt live. . . .”

“No; what’s the use? I am dying. . . . Here, take this in memory of me . . .” (He pointed at his breast.)

“What is this?”—he suddenly began to speak again:—“Look! the sea all golden; on it are blue islands, marble temples, palms, incense. . . .”

He fell silent dropped his eyes. . . .

Half an hour later he was dead. Elisyéi fell, weeping, on his breast. I closed his eyes.

On his neck was a small silken amulet, attached to a black cord. I took possession of it.

On the third day he was buried. . . . The noblest of hearts had vanished forever from the world! I myself flung the first handful of earth on him.

III

ANOTHER year and a half passed. Business forced me to go to Moscow. I established myself in one of the best hotels there. One day, as I was passing along the corridor, I glanced at the black-board whereon stood the names of travellers, and almost cried aloud in surprise: opposite No. 1 stood the name of Sófya Nikoláevna Asánoff. I had accidentally heard much that was evil about her husband of late; I had learned that he had become passionately addicted to liquor and cards; had ruined himself, and, altogether, was conducting himself badly. People spoke with respect of his wife. . . . Not without agitation did I return to my own room. Passion which had cooled long, long ago, seemed to begin to stir in my heart, and my heart began to beat violently. I decided to go to Sófya Nikoláevna. "What a long time has passed since the day we parted," I thought: "she has probably forgotten everything which took place between us then."

I sent to her Elisyéi, whom I had taken into my service after Pásynkoff's death, with my visiting-card, and ordered him to inquire whether she was at home, and whether I could see her. Elisyéi speedily returned, and announced that

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Sófya Nikoláevna was at home, and would receive me.

I betook myself to Sófya Nikoláevna. When I entered, she was standing in the middle of the room, and taking leave of some tall, stout gentleman or other. "As you like,"—he was saying, in a thick, sibilant voice:—"he is not a harmless man, he is a useless man; and every useless man in well-regulated society is harmful, harmful!"

With these words, the tall gentleman left the room. Sófya Nikoláevna turned to me.

"What a long time it is since we met!"—said she.—"Sit down, I beg of you. . . ."

We sat down. I looked at her. . . . To behold, after a long separation, features once dear; to recognise them, yet not to recognise them, as though through the former, still unforgotten face, another face—like, yet strange—had emerged; momentarily, almost involuntarily to note the traces imposed by time,—all this is sad enough. "And I, also, must have changed," one thinks to himself. . . .

Sófya Nikoláevna had not aged greatly, however; but when I had seen her for the last time, she had just entered her seventeenth year, and nine years had elapsed since that day. Her features had become more severe and regular than ever. As of old, they expressed sincerity of feeling and firmness; but in place of their former

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composure, a certain hidden pain and anxiety was manifested in them. Her eyes had grown deeper and darker. She had come to resemble her mother. . . .

Sófya Nikoláevna was the first to start the conversation.

“We are both changed,”—she began.—
“Where have you been all this time?”

“I have been wandering about here and there,” I replied.—“And have you been living in the country all the while?”

“Chiefly in the country. And I am only passing through here now.”

“How are your parents?”

“My mother is dead, but my father is still in Petersburg; my brother is in the service; Várya lives with him.”

“And your husband?”

“My husband?”—she said in a somewhat hurried voice;—“He is now in southern Russia, at the fairs. He was always fond of horses, as you know, and he has set up a stud-farm of his own . . . so, for that purpose . . . he is now buying horses.”

At that moment a little girl of eight entered the room, with her hair dressed in Chinese fashion, a very sharp and vivacious little face, and large, dark-grey eyes. On catching sight of me, she immediately thrust out her little foot, made a swift curtsy, and went to Sófya Nikoláevna.

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“ Let me introduce to you my little daughter,” —said Sófya Nikoláevna, touching the little girl with her finger under her chubby chin:—“ she would not consent to remain at home, but entreated me to take her with me.”

The little girl swept her quick eyes over me, and frowned slightly.

“ She ’s my fine, courageous girl,”—went on Sófya Nikoláevna:—“ she is not áfraid of anything. And she studies well; I must praise her for that.”

“ *Comment se nomme monsieur?* ”—inquired the little girl, in a low voice, bending toward her mother.

Sófya Nikoláevna mentioned my name. Again the little girl glanced at me.

“ What is your name? ”—I asked her.

“ My name is Lídiya,”—replied the little girl, looking me boldly in the eye.

“ They spoil you, I suppose,”—I remarked.

“ Who spoils me? ”

“ Who? Why, everybody, I suppose, beginning with your parents.” (The little girl darted a silent glance at her mother.) “ Konstantín Alexándrovitch, I imagine,”—I went on. . . .

“ Yes, yes,”—interposed Sófya Nikoláevna, while her little daughter did not remove her attentive gaze from her; “ my husband, of course he is very fond of children. . . . ”

A strange expression flashed over Lídiya’s in-

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telligent little face. Her lips pouted slightly; she cast down her eyes.

“Tell me,”—hastily added Sófyá Nikoláevna:—“you are here on business, I suppose?”

“Yes. . . . And you also?”

“Yes; I also. . . . In my husband’s absence, you understand, I am forced to attend to business.”

“*Maman!*”—began Lídiya.

“*Quoi, mon enfant?*”

“*Non—rien. . . . Je te dirai après.*”

Sófyá Nikoláevna laughed, and shrugged her shoulders.

We both maintained silence for a space, while Lídiya folded her arms pompously on her breast.

“Tell me, please,”—began Sófyá Nikoláevna again:—“I remember that you had a friend what in the world was his name? he had such a kind face he was always reading poetry; a very enthusiastic man. . . .”

“Was n’t it Pásynkoff?”

“Yes, yes; Pásynkoff where is he now?”

“He is dead.”

“Dead?”—repeated Sófyá Nikoláevna:—“what a pity!”

“Have I seen him?”—asked the little girl in a hasty whisper.

“No, Lídiya, thou hast not seen him. What a pity!”—repeated Sófyá Nikoláevna.

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“ You mourn for him” I began:—
“ What would you do if you had known him as I knew him? . . . But permit me to inquire: why did you mention him in particular? ”

“ By accident; I really don’t know why. . . .”
(Sófya Nikoláevna dropped her eyes.) —“ Lí-diya,”—she added:—“ go to thy nurse.”

“ Wilt thou call me when I may come? ”—asked the little girl.

“ I will.”

The little girl left the room. Sófya Nikoláevna turned to me.

“ Tell me, please, everything you know about Pásynkoff.”

I began my narration. I sketched, in brief words, the whole life of my friend; I tried, to the best of my ability, to depict his soul; I described his last meeting with me, his end.

“ And so that was the sort of man he was! ”—I exclaimed, as I concluded my narration:—“ he is gone from us, unnoticed, almost unappreciated! And that would be no great harm. What does popular appreciation amount to? But I feel pained, affronted, that such a man, with so loving and devoted a heart should have died, without having even once experienced the bliss of mutual love, without having awakened sympathy in a single woman’s heart worthy of him! . . . What if the rest of us do not taste that bliss? We are not worthy of it; but Pásynkoff!

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. . . And, moreover, have not I in my day encountered a thousand men who were not to be compared with him in any way, and who have been beloved? Are we bound to assume that certain defects in a man,—self-confidence, for example, or frivolousness, are indispensable in order that a woman shall become attached to him? Or is love afraid of perfection, of such perfection as is possible here on earth, as of something alien and terrible to it? ”

Sófya Nikoláevna listened to me to the end, without taking from me her stern and piercing eyes, or unsealing her lips; only her brows twitched from time to time.

“ Why do you assume,”—she said, after a brief pause,—“ that not a single woman loved your friend? ”

“ Because I know it, I know it for a fact.”

Sófya Nikoláevna was on the point of saying something, but stopped short. She seemed to be struggling with herself.

“ You are mistaken,”—she said at last:—“ I know a woman who loved your dead friend fervently: she loves and remembers him to this day . . . and the news of his death will wound her deeply.”

“ Who is the woman?—permit me to ask.”

“ My sister Várya.”

“ Varvára Nikoláevna!”—I exclaimed in amazement.

“ Yes.”

“ What? Varvára Nikoláevna?”—I repeated:—“ that”

“ I will complete your thought,”—pursued Sófya Nikoláevna:—“ that cold, indifferent, in your opinion, languid girl, loved your friend; that is the reason she has not married, and will not marry. Until to-day, I have been the only one to know this. Várya would have died, rather than betray her secret. In our family, we know how to hold our peace and endure.”

For a long time I gazed intently at Sófya Nikoláevna, involuntarily meditating on the bitter significance of her last words.

“ You have astounded me,”—I said at last.—“ But do you know, Sófya Nikoláevna, if I were not afraid of awakening in you unpleasant memories, I also, in my turn, could astound you. . . .”

“ I do not understand you,”—she returned slowly, and in some confusion.

“ You really do not understand me,”—said I, rising hastily:—“ and therefore, permit me, instead of a verbal explanation, to send you a certain article. . . .”

“ But what is it?”—she asked.

“ Be not disturbed, Sófya Nikoláevna; the question does not concern me.”

I bowed and returned to my room, got out the amulet which I had taken from Pásynkoff, and

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sent it to Sófya Nikoláevna, with the following note:

“This amulet, my dead friend wore constantly on his breast, and died with it there. In it you will find a note of yours to him, of utterly insignificant contents; you may read it. He wore it because he loved you passionately, as he confessed to me only the night before he died. Now that he is dead, why should not you know that his heart belonged to you?”

Elisyéi soon returned, and brought me back the amulet.

“How is this?”—I asked:—“Did she send no message to me?”

“No, sir.”

I said nothing for a while.

“Did she read my note?”

“She must have read it, sir; her little girl carried it to her.”

“Unapproachable,”—I thought, recalling Pásynkoff’s last words.—“Well, go,”—I said aloud.

Elisyéi smiled in a strange sort of way, and did not leave the room.

“A certain young girl . . . has come to see you, sir,”—he began.

“What girl?”

Elisyéi was silent for a space.

“Did n’t my late master tell you anything, sir?”

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“No. . . . What dost thou mean?”

“When he was in Nóvgorod,”—went on Elisyéi, touching the jamb of the door with his hand, “he made acquaintance with a certain young girl, say, for example. So it is that girl who wishes to see you, sir. I met her on the street the other day. I said to her: ‘Come; if the master commands, I will admit thee.’”

“Ask her in, ask her in, of course. But what sort of a girl is she?”

“A lowly girl, sir from the petty burgher class a Russian.”

“Did the late Yákoff Ivánitch love her?”

“He loved her right enough, sir. Well, she when she heard that my master was dead, she was greatly afflicted. She ’s a good girl, right enough, sir.”

“Ask her in, ask her in.”

Elisyéi went out, and immediately returned. Behind him came a girl in a gaily-coloured cotton gown, and with a dark kerchief on her head, which half covered her face. On catching sight of me, she was abashed, and turned away.

“What ails thee?”—Elisyéi said to her:—
“Go along, have no fear.”

I stepped up to her, and took her hand.

“What is your name?”—I asked her.

“Másha,”—she said, in a soft voice, casting a covert glance at me.

Judging from her appearance, she was twenty-

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two or three years of age; she had a round, rather plain but agreeable face, soft cheeks, gentle blue eyes, and small, very pretty, clean hands. She was neatly dressed.

“Did you know Yákoff Ivánitch?”—I went on.

“Yes, sir,”—she said, plucking at the ends of her kerchief, and tears started out on her eyelashes.

I asked her to be seated.

She immediately sat down on the edge of a chair, without ceremony, and without putting on airs. Elisyéi left the room.

“You made his acquaintance in Nóvgorod?”

“Yes, in Nóvgorod, sir,”—she replied, tucking both hands under her kerchief. “I only heard of his death day before yesterday, from Elisyéi Timoféitch, sir. Yákoff Ivánitch, when he went away to Siberia, promised to write, and he did write twice; but after that he did not write any more, sir. I would have followed him to Siberia, but he did not want me to, sir.”

“Have you relatives in Nóvgorod?”

“I have.”

“Did you live with them?”

“I lived with my mother and my married sister; but afterward my mother got angry with me; and it got crowded at my sister’s: they had a lot of children; so I moved away. I always set my hopes on Yákoff Ivánitch, and wanted

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nothing except to see him, for he was always affectionate to me—ask Elisyéi Timoféitch if he was n't."

Másha ceased speaking for a little while.

"I have his letters with me,"—she went on.—
"Here, look at them, sir."

She drew from her pocket several letters and gave them to me:—"Read them, sir,"—she added.

I unfolded one letter, and recognised Pásynkoff's handwriting.

"Dear Másha!" (He wrote a large, fine hand)—"yesterday thou didst lean thy dear little head against my head, and when I asked: 'why art thou doing this?' thou didst say to me: 'I want to listen to what you are thinking about.' I will tell thee what I was thinking about: I was thinking how nice it would be for Másha to learn to read and write! Then she could have deciphered this letter. . . ."

Másha glanced at the letter.

"He wrote me that while he was still in Nóvgorod,"—she said:—"when he was planning to teach me to read and write. Look at the others, sir. There is one from Siberia, sir. Here, read this one, sir."

I read the letters. They were all very affectionate, even tender. In one of them, precisely in that first letter from Siberia, Pásynkoff called Másha his best friend, and promised to send her money to come to Siberia, and wound up with

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the following words: "I kiss thy pretty little hands; the young girls here have no such hands; and their heads are no match for thine, neither are their hearts. . . . Read the little books which I gave thee, and remember me, and I shall not forget thee. Thou alone, alone hast loved me; and so I wish to belong to thee only. . . ."

"I see that he was very much attached to thee,"—I said, returning the letters to her.

"He loved me very much,"—returned Másha, carefully stowing the letters away in her pocket, and tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.—"I always set my hopes on him; if the Lord had prolonged his life, he would not have abandoned me. May God grant him the kingdom of heaven! . . ."

She wiped her eyes with a corner of her kerchief.

"Where are you living now?"—I inquired.

"I am living in Moscow now; I came with a lady; but now I am without a place. I went to Yákoff Ivánitch's aunt, but she is very poor herself. Yákoff Ivánitch often talked to me about you, sir,"—she added, rising and bowing:—"he was always very fond of you, and remembered you. I met Elisyéi Timoféitch here the day before yesterday, and I thought: would n't you be willing to help me, as I have no place at present. . . ."

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“With great pleasure, Márya allow me to inquire your patronymic?”

“Petróff,”—replied Másha, and dropped her eyes.

“I will do everything in my power for you, Márya Petróvna,”—I went on:—“I am only sorry that I am only passing through the town, and am very little acquainted in nice houses.”

Másha sighed.

“I ’d like to get some sort of a place, sir. . . . I don’t know how to cut out, but when it comes to sewing, I can sew anything well, and I can take care of children.”

“I must give her some money,” I thought: “but how am I to do it?”

“Hearken, Márya Petróvna,”—I began, not without confusion:—“you must excuse me, please, but you know from Pásynkoff’s words on what friendly terms I was with him. . . . Will you not permit me to offer to you for present necessities a small sum? . . .”

Másha darted a look at me.

“What, sir?”—she asked.

“Are you not in need of money?”—I said.

Másha blushed all over and bent her head.

“What should I do with money?”—she whispered. “Better get me a place, sir. . . .”

“I will try to get you a place; but I cannot answer for that with certainty; and really, it is

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wrong for you to feel ashamed. . . . For I am not a mere stranger to you. . . . Accept this from me, in memory of your friend. . . .”

I turned away, hastily took several bank-notes from my pocket-book, and gave them to her.

Masha stood motionless, her head drooping still lower. . . .

“Take it,”—I repeated.

She softly raised her eyes to mine, looked into my face with a mournful gaze, softly liberated her pale hand from under her kerchief, and stretched it out to me. I laid the bank-notes on her cold fingers. She silently hid her hand again under her kerchief, and dropped her eyes.

“And in future, Márya Petrónna,”—I went on,—“if you are in want of anything, please appeal directly to me.—I will give you my address.”

“I thank you humbly, sir,”—she said; and after a brief pause, she added: “Did n’t he speak to you about me, sir?”

“I met him the day before he died, Márya Petrónna. However, I do not recollect. . . . I think he did speak of you.”

Masha passed her hand over her hair, propped her cheek lightly on it, meditated, and after saying: “Farewell, sir,” she left the room.

I sat down at the table, and began to think bitter thoughts. This Másha, her relations to

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Pásynkoff, his letters, the secret love of Sófya Nikoláevna's sister for him. . . . "Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"—I whispered, sighing heavily. I recalled the whole of Pásynkoff's life, his childhood, his youth, Fräulein Frederika. . . . "There now,"—I thought: "Fate did not give thee much! she did not gladden thee with a great deal!"

On the following day, I called again on Sófya Nikoláevna. I was made to wait in the ante-room, and when I entered, Lídiya was already sitting beside her mother. I understood that Sófya Nikoláevna did not wish to renew the conversation of the preceding day.

We began to chat—really, I do not remember about what,—rumours of the town, business matters. . . . Lídiya frequently put in her little word, and gazed slyly at me. An amusing importance had suddenly made its appearance on her mobile little face. . . . The clever little girl must have divined that her mother had placed her by her side of deliberate purpose.

I rose, and began to take my leave. Sófya Nikoláevna escorted me to the door. "I made you no reply yesterday,"—she said, halting at the threshold:—"and what reply was there to make? Our life does not depend on ourselves; but we all have one anchor, from which we need never break away, unless we so wish it ourselves: the sense of duty."

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I silently bent my head in token of assent, and bade farewell to the young Puritan.

All that evening I remained at home; but I did not think of her; I kept thinking, thinking incessantly of my dear, my never-to-be-forgotten Pásynkoff—of that last of the romanticists; and feelings now sad, now tender, surged up sweetly in my breast, and resounded on the strings of my heart, which was not yet grown utterly old. . . . Peace to thy ashes, thou unpractical man, thou kind-hearted idealist! And may God grant to all practical gentlemen, to whom thou were ever an alien, and who, perchance, will still ridicule thy shadow,—may God grant them to taste at least the hundredth part of those pure delights, wherewith, in spite of Fate and men, thy poor and submissive life was adorned!

“FAUST”

(1855)

“FAUST”

A STORY IN NINE LETTERS

Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.

“FAUST” (Part I.)

FIRST LETTER

*From Pável Alexándrovitch B*** to Semyón
Nikoláevitch V***.*

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 6, 1850.

I ARRIVED here three days ago, my dear friend, and, in accordance with my promise, I take up my pen to write to thee. A fine rain has been drizzling down ever since morning; it is impossible to go out; and besides, I want to have a chat with thee. Here I am again, in my old nest, in which I have not been—dreadful to say—for nine whole years. Really, when one comes to think of it, I have become altogether another man. Yes, actually, another man. Dost thou remember in the drawing-room the small, dark mirror of my great-grandmother, with those queer scrolls at the corners? Thou wert always meditating on what it had beheld a hundred years ago. As soon as I arrived, I went

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to it, and was involuntarily disconcerted. I suddenly perceived how I had aged and changed of late. However, I am not the only one who has grown old. My tiny house, which was in a state of decrepitude long since, hardly holds itself upright now, and has sagged down, and sunk into the ground. My good Vasilievna, the housekeeper (thou hast not forgotten her, I am sure: she used to regale thee with such splendid preserves), has quite dried up and bent together. At sight of me, she could not cry out, and she did not fall to weeping, but merely grunted and coughed, sat down exhausted on a chair, and waved her hand in despair. Old Terenty is still alert, holds himself erect as of old, and as he walks turns out his feet clad in the same yellow nankeen trousers, and shod with the same squeaking goat's-leather shoes, with high instep and knots of ribbon, which evoked your emotions more than once. . . . But great heavens!—how loose those trousers now hang on his thin legs! how white his hair has grown! And his face has all shrivelled up to the size of your fist; and when he talked with me, when he began to make arrangements and issue orders in the adjoining room, I found him ridiculous, and yet I was sorry for him. All his teeth are gone, and he mumbles with a whistling and hissing sound.

On the other hand, the park has grown wonderfully beautiful: the little modest bushes of

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lilac, acacia, and honeysuckle (you and I set them out, dost remember?) have grown up into magnificent, dense thickets; the birches and maples, have all spread upward and outward; the linden alleys in particular, have become very fine. I love those alleys, I love their tender grey-green hue, and the delicate fragrance of the air beneath their arches; I love the mottled network of circles of light on the dark earth—I have no sand, as thou knowest. My favourite oak-sapling has already become a young oak-tree. Yesterday, in the middle of the day, I sat for more than an hour in its shade, on a bench. I felt greatly at my ease. Round about the grass gleamed so merrily green; over all lay a golden light, strong and soft; it even penetrated into the shade . . . and how many birds I heard! Thou hast not forgotten, I trust, that birds are my passion! The turtle-doves cooed incessantly, now and then an oriole whistled, a chaffinch executed its charming song, thrushes waxed angry and chattered, a cuckoo answered from afar; suddenly, like a madman, a woodpecker uttered a piercing scream. I listened, listened to all this soft, commingled din, and did not want to move, and in my heart was something which was not indolence, nor yet emotion.

And the park is not the only thing that has grown up; sturdy, robust lads, in whom I should never have recognised the little urchins whom I

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used to know, are constantly coming under my eye. And thy favourite, Timósha, has now become such a Timofyéi as thou canst not picture to thyself. Thou hadst fears for his health then, and predicted consumption for him; but thou shouldst take a look now at his huge, red hands, and the way they stick out from the tight sleeves of his nankeen coat, and what round, thick muscles stand out all over him! The nape of his neck is like that of a bull, and his head is all covered with round, blond curls,—a regular Farnese Hercules! His face has undergone less change, however, than the faces of the others have; it has not even increased greatly in size, and his cheery, “gaping” smile, as thou wert wont to express it, has remained the same as of yore. I have taken him for my valet; I discarded my Petersburg valet in Moscow: he was altogether too fond of putting me to shame, and making me feel his superiority in the usages of the capital.

I have not found a single one of my dogs; they are all dead. Néfta alone outlived the rest—and even she did not survive till my arrival, as Argos waited for Ulysses; she was not fated to behold her former master and comrade of the hunt with her dimmed eyes. But Shávka is still sound, and still barks hoarsely, and one ear is torn, as usual, and there are burrs in his tail, as is fitting.

I have established myself in thy former chamber. The sun strikes on it, it is true, and there

are a great many flies in it; but, on the other hand, it has less of the odour of an old house about it than the other rooms. 'T is strange! that musty, somewhat sour and withered odour acts powerfully on my imagination. I will not say that it is disagreeable to me—on the contrary; but it evokes in me sadness, and, eventually, dejection. Like thyself, I am very fond of the pot-bellied chests of drawers with their brass fastenings, the white arm-chairs with oval backs and curved legs, the glass chandeliers covered with fly-specks, with the huge egg of purple tinsel in the middle,—in a word, all sorts of furniture belonging to our grandfathers; but I cannot look at all this constantly: a sort of perturbed tedium (precisely that!) takes possession of me. In the room where I have settled myself, the furniture is of the most ordinary description, home-made; but I have left in one corner a tall, narrow cupboard with shelves, on which, athwart the dust are barely visible divers old-fashioned, pot-bellied vessels, of blue and green glass. And I have given orders that there shall be hung on the wall,—thou wilt recall it,—that portrait of a woman, in the black frame, which thou wert wont to call the portrait of Manon Lescaut. It has grown a little darker in these nine years; but the eyes look forth as pensively, slily, and tenderly as ever, and the lips smile in the same frivolous and mournful way as of old, and the half-

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stripped rose dangles as softly as ever from the slender fingers. The window-shades in my room amuse me greatly. Once upon a time they used to be green, but have grown yellow in the sunlight. Upon them, in black, are painted scenes from d’Arlincourt’s “Hermit.” On one shade, this hermit, with the biggest sort of a beard, staringly-prominent eyes, and in sandals, is dragging off to the mountains some dishevelled young lady or other; on the other shade, a fierce combat is in progress between four knights in skull-caps, and with puffs on their shoulders; one is lying, *en raccourci*, slain—in short, all the horrors are depicted, and all around reigns such undisturbed tranquillity, and such gentle reflections are cast on the ceiling from the shades themselves. . . . A sort of spiritual quietude has descended upon me since I have established myself here. I do not want to do anything; I do not want to see any one, to meditate about anything. I am too indolent to speculate; but not too indolent to think; but thinking is not indolence; they are two separate things, as thou art well aware.

At first the memories of my childhood invaded me. . . . Wheresoever I went, whatsoever I looked at, they surged up from every direction, clear, clear to the most minute details, and motionless, as it were, in their distinct definiteness. . . . Then those memories were suc-

ceeded by others; then . . . then I softly turned away from the past, and there remained nothing in my breast save a sort of dreamy burden. Just imagine! As I sat on the dam, under the willow, I suddenly fell to weeping, quite unexpectedly; and would have wept for a long time, in spite of my advanced age, had I not been mortified by a passing peasant-wife, who stared at me with curiosity, then, without turning her head toward me, made a straight, low obeisance, and walked past. I should have liked greatly to remain in that frame of mind (I shall not weep any more, of course) until my departure hence, that is to say, until the month of September; and I shall be very much chagrined, if any one of the neighbours should take it into his head to call on me. However, apparently, there is nothing to fear in that quarter; for I have no near neighbours. Thou wilt understand me, I am convinced; thou knowest, from thine own experience, how beneficial solitude often is. . . . I need it now, after all sorts of wanderings.

But I shall not be bored. I have brought with me several books, and I have a very fair library here. Yesterday I opened the cases, and rummaged for a long time among the musty books. I found many curious things, which I had not noticed before: “Candide,” in a manuscript translation of the ’70s; newspapers and journals of the same period; “The Triumphant Chame-

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leon ” (that is to say, Mirabeau) ; “ Le Paysan Perversi,” and so forth. I came upon some children’s books, my own, and those of my father, and my grandmother, and, even—just fancy!—of my great-grandmother. On one very, very ancient French grammar, in a gay binding, was written in large letters: “ *Ce livre appartient à M-lle Eudoxie de Lavrine,*” and the year was added—1741. I saw books which I had brought from abroad some time or other; among others, Goethe’s “Faust.” Perhaps thou art not aware that there was a time when I knew “Faust” by heart (the first part, of course), word for word; I could not read it enough to satisfy myself. . . . But, other times, other dreams, and in the course of the last nine years I don’t believe I have taken Goethe in my hand a single time. With what an inexpressible feeling did I behold the little book, but too familiar to me (a bad edition of 1828). I carried it off with me, lay down on my bed, and began to read. What an effect the whole magnificent first scene had upon me! The appearance of the Spirit of Earth, his words; thou rememberest: “On the billows of life, in the whirlwind of action,” aroused within me the trepidation and chill of rapture which I have not experienced for many a day. I recalled everything: Berlin, and my student days, and Fräulein Klara Schtik, and Zeidelmann, in the part of Mephistopheles, and everything and every

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one. . . . For a long time I could not get to sleep; my youth came and stood before me, like a ghost; like a fire, like a poison, it coursed through my veins; my heart expanded and refused to contract; something swept across its strings, and desires began to seethe.

Such were the reveries to which thy friend, aged almost forty, surrendered himself as he sat solitary, in his isolated little house! What if some one had seen me? Well, what if they had? I should not have been in the least ashamed. To feel ashamed is also a sign of youth; but I have begun to notice that I am growing old, and knowest thou why? This is the reason. I now try to magnify to myself my cheerful sensations, and to belittle the mournful ones, while in the days of youth I proceeded on the diametrically opposite plan. One goes about then hoarding his sorrow as though it were a treasure, and is ashamed of a cheerful impulse. . . .

And nevertheless, it seems to me that, notwithstanding all my experience of life, there is still something more in the world, friend Horatio, that I have not experienced, and that that “something” is about the most important of all.

Ekh, how I have run on! Farewell! until another time. What art thou doing in Petersburg? By the way: Savély, my rustic cook, asks to be remembered to thee. He also has grown old, but not too much so, has waxed fat and some-

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what pot-bellied. He makes just as well as of old, chicken soup with boiled onions, curd-cakes with fancy edges, and *pigus*,¹ the famous dish of the steppes, which made thy tongue turn white, gave thee indigestion, and stood like a stake through thee for four-and-twenty hours. On the other hand, he dries up the roasts, as of old, to such a point, that you might bang them against the plate—they are regular cardboard. But farewell!

Thine,

P. B.

SECOND LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M . . . OE, June 12, 1850.

I HAVE a rather important bit of news to communicate to thee, my dear friend.—Listen! Yesterday, before dinner, I took a fancy for a stroll,—only not in the park; I walked along the road leading to town. It is very pleasant to walk on a long, straight road, without any object, and with long strides. One seems to be engaged in business, hastening somewhere or other.—I look: a calash is driving to meet me. “Is n’t it coming to my house?” I thought with secret alarm. . . . But, no; in the calash sits a gentleman with a moustache, a stranger to me. I recover my

¹ A sour soup, with cucumbers.—TRANSLATOR.

equanimity. But suddenly this gentleman, on coming alongside of me, orders his coachman to stop the horses, courteously lifts his cap, and with still greater courtesy asks me: “ Am not I so-and-so? ” calling me by name. I, in turn, come to a halt, and with the animation of a criminal being conducted to his trial, reply: “ I am so-and-so, ” and stare the while, like a sheep, at the gentleman with the moustache, thinking to myself: “ Why, I certainly have seen him somewhere or other! ”

“ You do not recognise me? ”—he enunciates, alighting in the meantime, from the calash.

“ I do not in the least, sir. ”

“ But I recognised you instantly. ”

One word follows another; it turns out that he is Priímkoff,—dost thou remember? Our old comrade in the university. “ What important bit of news is this? ” thou art thinking at this moment, my dear Semyón Nikoláitch.—“ Priím-koff, so far as I recollect, was a rather frivolous fellow, although neither malicious nor stupid. ”—All that is so, my dear friend; but listen to the continuation of my tale.

“ I was greatly delighted, ” says he, “ when I heard that you had come to your village, to our neighbourhood. But I was not the only one who rejoiced. ”

“ Allow me to inquire, ”—I inquired:—“ who else was so amiable. . . . ”

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“ My wife.”

“ Your wife? ”

“ Yes, my wife; she is an old acquaintance of yours.”

“ Permit me to inquire your wife’s name? ”

“ Her name is Vyéra Nikoláevna; she was born Éltzoff. . . . ”

“ Vyéra Nikoláevna! ”—I exclaimed involuntarily. . . .

So this is that same important piece of news, of which I spoke to thee at the beginning of my letter.

But perhaps thou wilt not discern anything important about it. . . . I must narrate to thee somewhat of my past of my long-past life.

When we, thou and I, came out of the university, I was twenty-two years of age. Thou didst enter the government service; I, as thou art aware, decided to betake myself to Berlin. But there was nothing to do in Berlin before October. I wanted to spend the summer in Russia, in the country, to have my fill of lounging for the last time; and then to set to work in sober earnest. As to how far this last project was executed, I will not dilate at present. . . . “ But where shall I spend the summer? ” I asked myself. I did not wish to go to my own country-place: my father had recently died, I had no near relatives, I dreaded solitude, tedium. . . .

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And therefore, I joyfully accepted the suggestion of one of my relatives, my great-uncle, that I should visit him on his estate, in the T*** Government. He was a wealthy man, kind-hearted and simple, lived in fine style, and had a manor worthy of a nobleman. I established myself in his house. My uncle had a large family: two sons and five daughters. In addition to these, there dwelt in his house a throng of people. Guests were incessantly arriving,—and, nevertheless, things were not cheerful. The days flowed by noisily; there was no possibility of isolating one's self. Everything was done in company; everybody tried to divert themselves in some way, to devise something, and by the end of the day everybody was frightfully tired. This life had a commonplace savour. I had already begun to meditate departure, and was only waiting until my uncle's Name-day should arrive; but on that very day—the Name-day—I saw Vyéra Nikoláevna Éltzoff at the ball,—and remained.

She was then sixteen. She lived with her mother on a tiny estate, about five versts from my uncle's. Her father—a remarkable man, they say—had speedily attained to the rank of colonel, and would have risen still higher, but perished while yet a young man, accidentally shot in hunting by a comrade. Vyéra Nikoláevna was a child when he died. Her mother, also,

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was a remarkable woman: she spoke several languages, she knew a great deal. She was seven or eight years older than her husband, whom she had married for love; he had secretly carried her off from her father's house. She barely survived his loss, and until her own death (according to Priímkoﬀ's statement, she died soon after her daughter's marriage) she wore black garments only. I vividly recall her face: expressive, dark, with thick hair sprinkled with grey, large stern eyes which seemed extinguished, and a straight, delicate nose. Her father—his surname was Ladánoff—had lived for fifteen years in Italy. Vyéra Nikoláevna's mother had been born the daughter of a plain peasant-woman of Albano, who had been killed on the day after the birth of her child, by a man of Transtevere, her betrothed, from whom Ladánoff had stolen her. . . . This story had made a great noise in its day. On his return to Russia, Ladánoff not only did not step out of his house, but even out of his study, busied himself with chemistry, anatomy, the cabalistic art; tried to lengthen the life of mankind, and imagined that he could enter into relations with spirits, and call up the dead. . . . The neighbours looked on him as a wizard. He was extremely fond of his daughter, taught her everything himself; but did not forgive her for her elopement with Éltzoff, would not admit her to his presence, either

her or her husband, foretold a sorrowful life for both of them, and died alone. On being left a widow, Madame Éltzoff consecrated her leisure to the education of her daughter, and received almost no one. When I made the acquaintance of Vyéra Nikoláevna,—just imagine it!—she had never been in a large town in her life, not even in her county town.

Vyéra Nikoláevna did not resemble the ordinary young Russian gentlewoman; a sort of special stamp lay upon her. What instantly impressed me in her was the wonderful repose of all her movements and remarks. Apparently, she did not worry about anything, did not get excited, answered simply and sensibly, and listened attentively. The expression of her face was sincere and upright, as that of a child, but somewhat cold and monotonous, although not pensive. She was rarely merry, and then not like other people: the clarity of an innocent soul, more delightful than merriment, glowed in all her being. She was short of stature, very well made, rather thin; she had regular and tender features, a very handsome, smooth brow, golden-chestnut hair, a straight nose, like her mother, and quite full lips; her grey eyes, with a tinge of black, looked out somewhat too directly from beneath her thick, upward-curling lashes. Her hands were small, but not very pretty; people who possess talent do not have such hands . . . and,

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as a matter of fact, Vyéra Nikoláevna had no particular talents. Her voice was as ringing as that of a seven-year-old girl. At my uncle's ball I was introduced to her mother, and, a few days later, I drove to see them for the first time.

Madame Éltzoff was a very strange woman, with a great deal of character, persistent and concentrated. She exerted a strong influence on me: I both respected and feared her. With her everything was done on a system; and she had reared her daughter on a system, but did not restrain her of her liberty. Her daughter loved her and believed in her blindly. It sufficed for Madame Éltzoff to give her a book, and to say: “ Here, don't read this page,”—and she would, probably, skip the preceding page, but would not even glance at the forbidden one. But Madame Éltzoff had also her *idées fixes*, her hobbies. For example, she feared everything which might act on the imagination, as she did fire; and therefore her daughter, up to the age of seventeen, had not read a single poem, while in geography, history, and even natural history, she frequently nonplussed me, a university graduate, and not one who had stood low in his class either, as thou wilt, perhaps, remember. I once undertook to argue with Madame Éltzoff about her hobby, although it was difficult to draw her into conversation: she was extremely taciturn. She merely shook her head.

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“ You say,”—she remarked at last,—“ that it is *both* useful *and* agreeable to read poetical productions. . . . I think that one should, as early as possible, make a choice in life *either* of the useful *or* of the agreeable, and so make up one’s mind once for all. I, also, once upon a time, tried to combine the two things. . . . It is impossible and leads to destruction or to insipidity.”

Yes, a wonderful being was that woman, an honourable, proud being, not devoid of fanaticism and superstition of a certain sort. “ I fear life,”—she said to me one day.—And, in fact, she did fear it,—she feared those secret forces upon which life is erected, and which rarely but suddenly make their way to the surface. Woe to the person over whose head they break! These forces had made themselves felt by Madame Éltzoff in a terrible manner: remember the death of her mother, her husband, her father. . . . It was enough to terrify any one. I never saw her smile. She seemed to have locked herself up, and flung the key into the water. She must have gone through a great deal of sorrow in her day, and she never shared it with any one whomsoever. She had trained herself not to give way to her feelings to such a degree, that she was even ashamed to display her passionate love for her daughter; she never once kissed her in my presence, never called her by a pet name, but always “ Vyéra.” I remember one remark of

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hers. I happened to say to her that all we people of the present day were half-broken. . . . “There’s no use in breaking one’s self so,”—she said:—“one must subdue one’s self thoroughly, —or not touch one’s self. . . .”

Very few persons called at Madame Éltzoff’s; but I visited her frequently. I was secretly conscious that she felt kindly toward me; and I liked Vyéra Nikoláevna very much. She and I chatted and strolled together. . . . Her mother did not interfere with us; the daughter herself did not like to be apart from her mother, and I, on my side, did not feel any need of solitary conversations. . . . Vyéra Nikoláevna had a strange habit of thinking aloud; at night she talked loudly and intelligibly in her sleep of what had impressed her during the day.—One day, after scanning me attentively, and, according to her wont, softly propping her chin on her hand, she said: “It strikes me that B*** is a good man; but one cannot rely on him.” Our relations were of the most friendly and even character; only one day it seemed to me that I noticed far away, somewhere in the depths of her bright eyes, a strange something, a sort of softness and tenderness. . . . But perhaps I was mistaken.

In the meanwhile, time passed on, and the day came when I was obliged to make preparations for departure. But still I tarried. As I recall

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it, I persisted in thinking that I should not soon see again that charming girl, to whom I had grown so attached—and I should feel uncomfortable. . . . Berlin began to lose its power of attraction. I did not dare to admit to myself what had taken place in me,—and I did not understand what it was that had taken place in me,—it was as though a mist were roving about in my soul. At last, one morning, everything suddenly became clear to me. “What’s the use of seeking further?”—I thought. “Why should I strive onward? For the truth will not surrender itself into my hands, all the same. Would it not be better to remain here? Ought not I to marry?” and, just imagine, this thought of marriage did not alarm me in the least then. On the contrary, I was delighted at it. More than that; that very same day, I avowed my intentions, only not to Vyéra, but to Madame Éltzoff herself. The old lady looked at me.

“No,”—said she:—“my dear fellow, go to Berlin, and break yourself a little more. You are good; but you are not the sort of husband whom Vyéra needs.”

I cast down my eyes, flushed scarlet, and—what will probably amaze thee still more—I inwardly agreed with Madame Éltzoff on the spot. A week later I took my departure, and have never seen either her or Vyéra since that time.

I have described to thee my adventure in brief,

because I know that thou dost not like anything “long-drawn-out.” On arriving in Berlin, I very promptly forgot Vyéra Nikoláevna. . . . But, I must confess, that the unexpected news of her has agitated me. I have been impressed by the thought that she is so near, that she is my neighbour, that I shall see her in a few days. The past has suddenly started up before me, as though it had sprung out of the earth, and were fairly swooping down on me. Priímkoﬀ informed me that he had called upon me with the express purpose of renewing our ancient acquaintance, and that he hoped to see me at his house very shortly. He informed me that he had served in the cavalry, had retired with the rank of lieutenant, purchased an estate eight versts distant from mine, and was intending to occupy himself with farming; that he had had three children, but two of them had died, and only a five-year-old daughter was left.

“And does your wife remember me?”—I asked.

“Yes, she does,”—he replied with a slight hesitation.—“Of course, she was then a child, so to speak; but her mother always praised you highly, and you know how she prizes every word of the deceased.”

Madame Éltzoff’s words, that I was not a suitable husband for Vyéra, recurred to my memory. . . . “So thou wert suitable,”—I thought.

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darting a sidelong glance at Priímkoff. He spent several hours at my house. He is a very good, nice fellow, he talks very modestly, has a very good-natured gaze; one cannot help liking him but his intellectual faculties have not developed since the period of our acquaintance with him. I shall go to see him 'without fail, to-morrow, perhaps. I shall find it extremely interesting to see how Vyéra Nikoláevna has turned out.

Thou art, probably, laughing at me now, thou rascal, as thou sittest at thy director's table; but nevertheless, I shall write to thee what impression she makes on me. Farewell! Until the next letter.

Thine,

P. B.

THIRD LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 16, 1850.

WELL, my dear fellow, I have been at her house, I have seen her. First of all, I must communicate to thee a remarkable circumstance: believe me or not, as thou wilt, but she has hardly changed at all, either in face or in figure. When she came out to greet me, I almost exclaimed aloud: a young girl of seventeen, and that 's all there is to be said! Only, her eyes are not like those of

a little girl; however, even in her youth she did not have childish eyes, they were too bright. But there is the same composure, the same serenity, the same voice, not a single wrinkle on her brow, just as though she had been lying somewhere in the snow all these years. And now she is twenty-eight years old, and has had three children. . . 'T is incomprehensible! Pray, do not think that I am exaggerating out of prejudice; on the contrary, this immutability in her does not please me.

A woman of eight-and-twenty, a wife and a mother, ought not to look like a young girl; for she has not lived in vain. She greeted me very cordially; but my arrival simply enraptured Prímkoﬀ; that good fellow looks as though he would like to get attached to some one. Their house is very comfortable and clean. Vyéra Nikoláevna was dressed like a young girl, also; all in white, with a sky-blue sash, and a slender gold chain on her neck. Her little daughter is very charming, and does not resemble her in the least; she reminds one of her grandmother. In the drawing-room, over the divan, hangs a portrait of that strange woman, a striking likeness. It caught my eye the moment I entered. She seemed to be staring sternly and attentively at me. We sat down, recalled old times, and gradually got into conversation. I kept involuntarily glancing at the gloomy portrait of Madame

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Éltzoff. Vyéra Nikoláevna was sitting directly under it; it is her favourite place. Fancy my amazement! To this day, Vyéra Nikoláevna has not read a single romance, a single poem—in short, as she expresses it, a single work of fiction! This incredible indifference to the loftiest joys of the mind enraged me. In a sensible woman, and one who, so far as I can judge, possesses delicate feelings, this is simply unpardonable.

“Why,”—I said:—“have you made it a rule never to read such books?”

“I have never happened to do it,”—she replied.—“I have not had the time.”

“Not had the time! I am astonished! You might at least have inspired your wife with a wish to do so,”—I went on, addressing Priímkoff.

“It would have given me great pleasure” Priímkoff began, but Vyéra Nikoláevna interrupted him.

“Don’t pretend; thou art no great lover of poetry thyself.”

“Of poetry,”—he began,—“I really am not very fond; but romances, for example. . . .”

“But what do you do, how do you occupy yourselves evenings?”—I inquired.—“Do you play cards?”

“Sometimes we do,”—she replied:—“but is n’t there plenty to occupy us? We read, also; there are good books besides poetry.”

“Why do you attack poetry so?”

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“I don’t attack it; I have been accustomed from my childhood not to read works of fiction; my mother thought that was proper, and the longer I live, the more convinced do I become that everything which my mother did, everything she said, was the truth, the sacred truth.”

“Well, as you like; but I cannot agree with you. I am convinced that you do wrong in depriving yourself of the purest, the most lawful enjoyment. Surely, you do not reject music, painting; then why should you reject poetry?”

“I do not reject it. Up to the present time I have not made acquaintance with it—that is all.”

“Then I shall take the matter in hand! Surely, your mother did not forbid you to acquaint yourself with the productions of elegant literature during your entire life?”

“No; when I married, my mother removed all restrictions from me; it has never entered my head to read . . . what was it you called it? . . . well, in short, to read romances.”

I listened with surprise to Vyéra Nikoláevna. I had not expected this.

She gazed at me with her tranquil look. That is the way birds gaze, when they are not afraid.

“I will bring you a book!”—I exclaimed. (The thought of “Faust,” which I had recently read, flashed through my mind.)

Vyéra Nikoláevna heaved a soft sigh.

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“ It . . . it is not Georges Sand? ”—she inquired, not without timidity.

“ Ah! so you have heard of her? Well, and what if it were she, where ’s the harm? . . . No; I shall bring you another author. You have not forgotten your German, I suppose? ”

“ No, I have not forgotten it.”

“ She speaks it like a German,”—interposed Priimkoff.

“ Well, that ’s fine! I shall bring you . . . but there now, you shall see what a marvellous thing I shall bring you.”

“ Well, very good, I shall see. And now let us go into the garden, for Natásha will not be able to sit quietly otherwise.”

She put on a round straw hat, a child’s hat, exactly like the one which her daughter donned, only a little larger, and we betook ourselves to the garden. I walked by her side. In the fresh air, in the shadow of the lofty lindens, her face seemed to me more charming than ever, especially when she turned slightly and threw back her head in order to look up at me from under the brim of her hat. Had it not been for Priimkoff, had it not been for the little girl who was skipping on in front of us, I really might have thought that I was not thirty-five years of age, but three-and-twenty; that I was only just making ready to set out for Berlin; the more so, as the garden in which we were greatly resembled

the garden on Madame Éltzoff's estate. I could not refrain from communicating my impressions to Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“Everybody tells me that I have changed very little in outward appearance,”—she replied:—“moreover, I have remained the same inwardly also.”

We approached a small Chinese house.

“There, we did not have such a little house at Ósinovko,”—she said:—“but you must not mind its being so rickety and faded; it is very nice and cool inside.”

We entered the little house. I glanced about me.

“Do you know what, Vyéra Nikoláevna,”—I said:—“order a table and a few chairs to be brought hither before I come. It really is extraordinarily nice here. I will read aloud to you here. . . . Goethe's ‘Faust’ . . . that is the thing I mean to read to you.”

“Yes; there are no flies here,”—she remarked ingenuously;—“but when shall you come?”

“Day after to-morrow.”

“Very well,”—she said:—“I will give orders.”

Natásha, who had entered the house in company with us, suddenly uttered a scream, and sprang back, all pale.

“What is the matter?”—asked Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“Akh, mamma,”—said the little girl, pointing

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at one corner,—“look, what a dreadful spider!”

Vyéra Nikoláevna glanced at the corner; a huge, mottled spider was crawling quietly along the wall.

“What is there to be afraid of?”—she said:—
“it does not bite; see here.”

And before I could stop her, she took the hideous insect in her hand, let it run about on her palm, and flung it aside.

“Well, you are a brave woman!”—I exclaimed.

“Where is the bravery in that? That is not one of the poisonous spiders.”

“Evidently, as of old, you are strong in natural history. I would n’t have taken it in my hand.”

“There ’s no cause to be afraid of it,”—repeated Vyéra Nikoláevna.

Natásha gazed silently at us and smiled.

“How much like your mother she is!”—I remarked.

“Yes,”—replied Vyéra Nikoláevna, with a smile of satisfaction;—“that delights me greatly. God grant that she may resemble her not in face alone!”

We were summoned to dinner, and after dinner I took my departure. *N. B.* The dinner was very good and savoury.—I make this remark in parenthesis, for thy benefit, thou sponger! To-

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morrow I shall carry “ Faust ” to them. I ’m afraid that old Goethe and I shall suffer defeat. I will describe everything to thee in detail.

Come now, what thinkest thou about all “ these events ”? Probably, that she has made a powerful impression on me, that I am ready to fall in love, and so forth? Nonsense, my dear fellow! It is high time for me to exercise moderation. I have played the fool long enough; *finis!* One cannot begin life over again at my age. Moreover, even in former days, I never liked women of that sort. . . . But what women I did like!!

I tremble—my heart is sore—
I ’m ashamed of my idols.

In any case, I am very glad of these neighbours, I am glad of the possibility of meeting a sensible, simple, limpid being; but what happens further thou shalt know in due time.

Thine,

P. B.

FOURTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 20, 1850.

THE reading took place yesterday, my dear friend, and as to the precise manner of it, details follow. First of all, I make haste to say, it was

an unexpected success that is, “ success ” is not the word for it. . . . Come, listen. I arrived for dinner. There were six of us at table: she, Priímkoff, her little daughter, the governess (an insignificant little white figure), I, and some old German or other, in a short, light-brown frock-coat, neat, well-shaven, experienced, with the most peaceable and honest of faces, a toothless smile, and an odour of chicory coffee all old Germans smell like that. He was introduced to me; he was a certain Schimmel, a teacher of the German language in the family of Prince X***, a neighbour of Priímkoff. It appears that he is a favourite of Vyéra Nikoláevna’s, and she had invited him to be present at the reading. We dined late and did not leave the table for a long time; then we went for a stroll. The weather was magnificent. It had rained in the morning, and the wind had been blowing; but toward evening everything had quieted down. She and I emerged into an open glade. Directly above this glade, a large, rosy cloud hung high and light; grey streaks, like smoke, stretched across it; on its extreme edge twinkled a tiny star, now appearing, now disappearing, while a little further off the white sickle of the moon was visible against the faintly crimsoned azure. I pointed out the cloud to Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“ Yes,”—she said:—“ it is very beautiful; but look yonder.”—I looked. A huge, dark-blue

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storm-cloud was ascending like smoke, and concealing the setting sun; in aspect, it presented the likeness of a mountain spouting fire; its crest was spread athwart the sky in a broad sheaf; an ominous crimson glow surrounded it with a brilliant border, and in one spot, at the very centre of it, forced its way through the heavy mass, as though tearing itself free from a red-hot crater. . . .

“ There is going to be a thunder-storm,”—remarked Priímkoff.

But I am getting away from the main point.—In my last letter I forgot to tell thee that on my return home from the Priímkoffs', I repented of having named “ Faust ” in particular; Schiller would have been much more suitable for a first reading, if it must be a German. I was particularly alarmed by the first scene, before the acquaintance with Gretchen; I was uneasy on the score of Mephistopheles also. But I was under the influence of “ Faust,” and could not have read anything else with good will. It was already perfectly dark when we betook ourselves to the little Chinese house; it had been put in order the day before. Directly opposite the door, in front of a small divan, stood a round table, covered with a cloth; chairs and arm-chairs were set round about; on the table burned a lamp. I seated myself on the divan, and got my book. Vyéra Nikoláevna placed herself in an arm-chair at some distance, not far from the door.

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Beyond the door, in the darkness, a green branch of acacia, illuminated by the lamp, displayed itself, swaying gently; now and then a current of night air diffused itself through the room. Priímkoﬀ sat down near me, at the table, the German by his side. The governess had remained in the house with Natáša. I made a little introductory speech; I alluded to the ancient legend of Dr. Faustus, to the significance of Mephistopheles, to Goethe himself, and begged that they would stop me if anything should seem to them unintelligible. Then I cleared my throat. . . . Priímkoﬀ asked me whether I did not need some sugar and water, and, so far as I was able to observe, was greatly pleased with himself for having put that question to me. I declined. Profound silence reigned. I began to read, without raising my eyes; I felt awkward, my heart beat violently and my voice trembled. The first exclamation of sympathy burst from the German, and he alone, during the course of the reading, broke the silence. . . . “ Wonderful! Sublime!”—he kept repeating, now and then adding: “ Here it is deep.” Priímkoﬀ was bored, as I could plainly see; he understood German imperfectly, and confessed that he was not fond of poetry! It was his own fault.—At table, I had wanted to hint that the reading could proceed without him, but had been ashamed to do so. Vyéra Nikoláevna

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did not stir; a couple of times I shot a stealthy glance at her; her eyes were fixed straight and attentively on me; her face seemed to me to be pale. After Faust's first meeting with Gretchen, she separated herself from the back of her chair, clasped her hands, and remained motionless in that attitude until the end. I felt conscious that Priímkoff found it disgusting, and at first this chilled me; but gradually I forgot all about him, warmed up, and read with fervour, with enthusiasm. . . . I was reading for Vyéra Nikoláevna alone; an inward voice told me that “ Faust ” was taking effect on her. When I had finished (I skipped the intermezzo; that bit, by its style, belongs to the second part; and I also omitted portions from the “ Night on the Brocken ”) when I had finished, when the last “ Heinrich ! ” had rung out,—the German ejaculated with emotion: “ Heavens! how beautiful ! ” Priímkoff sprang to his feet as though delighted (poor fellow!), heaved a sigh, and began to thank me for the pleasure I had given them. . . . But I did not answer him; I glanced at Vyéra Nikoláevna. . . . I wanted to hear what she would say. She rose, walked to the door with wavering steps, stood awhile on the threshold, and then quietly went out into the garden. I rushed after her. She had already succeeded in getting several paces away; her white gown was barely visible in the dense shadow.

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“ Well? ” I cried;—“ did n’t you like it? ”

She halted.

“ Can you let me have that book? ”—her voice rang out.

“ I will make you a present of it, Vyéra Nikoláevna, if you care to have it.”

“ Thank you! ”—she replied, and vanished.

Priímkoﬀ and the German approached me.

“ How wonderfully warm it is! ”—remarked Priímkoﬀ;—“ even sultry. But where has my wife gone? ”

“ To the house, I believe,”—I replied.

“ I think it will soon be supper-time,”—he responded.—“ You read capitally, capitally,”—he added, after a brief pause.

“ Vyéra Nikoláevna seemed to be pleased with ‘ Faust,’ ” I remarked.

“ Without doubt! ”—exclaimed Priímkoﬀ.

“ Oh, of course! ”—chimed in Schimmel.

We entered the house.

“ Where is the mistress? ”—Priímkoﬀ asked of a maid whom we encountered.

“ She has been pleased to go to her bedroom.”

Priímkoﬀ directed his steps to the bedroom.

I went out on the terrace with Schimmel. The old man raised his eyes to the sky.

“ How many stars there are! ”—he said slowly, as he took a pinch of snuff;—“ and all of them are worlds,”—he added, taking another pinch.

I did not consider it necessary to answer him, and only gazed upward in silence. A secret per-

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plexity was weighing on my soul. . . . The stars seemed to me to be gazing seriously at us. Five minutes later, Priímkoff made his appearance and summoned us to the dining-room. Vyéra Nikoláevna soon came also. We sat down.

“ Just look at Vyérotchka,”—said Priímkoff to me.

I glanced at her.

“ Well? Don’t you notice anything? ”

I really did note a change in her face, but I know not why I answered:

“ No, nothing.”

“ Her eyes are red,”—went on Priímkoff.

I held my peace.

“ Just fancy, I went to her up-stairs, and found her; she was crying. It is a long time since that has happened with her. I can tell you the last time she cried: it was when our Sásha died. So that ’s what you have done with your ‘ Faust ’!” he added with a smile.

“ You must see now, Vyéra Nikoláevna,”—I began,—“ that I was right when”

“ I had not expected that,”—she interrupted me;—“ but God knows whether you are right. Perhaps the reason my mother prohibited my reading such books was because she knew”

Vyéra Nikoláevna stopped short.

“ Because she knew?”—I repeated.—“ Tell me.”

“ What is the use? I am ashamed of myself

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as it is; what was I crying about? However, you and I will discuss this further. There were many things which I did not quite understand.”

“ Then why did n’t you stop me? ”

“ I understood all the words, and their sense, but ”

She did not finish her phrase, and became pensive. At that moment, the noise of the foliage, suddenly stirred by the rising wind, swept through the garden. Vyéra Nikoláevna started, and turned her face toward the open window.

“ I told you that there would be a thunderstorm! ”—cried Priímkoff.—“ But what makes thee tremble so, Vyérotchka? ”

She glanced at him in silence. The lightning, flashing faintly far away, was reflected on her impassive face.

“ All thanks to ‘Faust,’ ”—went on Priímkoff.

“ After supper, we must go immediately to bye-bye, must n’t we, Herr Schimmel? ”

“ After moral pleasure physical repose is as beneficial as it is useful,”—replied the good German, drinking off a glass of vodka.

We parted immediately after supper. As I bade Vyéra Nikoláevna good night, I shook hands with her; her hand was cold. I reached the chamber assigned to me, and stood for a long time at the window before undressing and getting into bed.

Priímkoff’s prediction was fulfilled; a thun-

“ FAUST ”

der-storm gathered and broke. I listened to the roar of the wind, the clatter and beating of the rain, I saw how, at every flash of lightning, the church, built close at hand, near the lake, now suddenly was revealed in black against a white ground, then as white against a black ground, then again was swallowed up in the gloom. . . . But my thoughts were far away. I was thinking of Vyéra Nikoláevna: I was thinking of what she would say to me when she should have read “Faust” herself; I was thinking of her tears; I was recalling how she had listened. . . .

The thunder-storm had long since passed off, —the stars were beaming, everything had fallen silent round about. Some bird with which I was not familiar was singing in various tones, repeating the same phrase several times in succession. Its resonant, solitary voice rang out oddly amid the profound silence; and still I did not go to bed. . . .

On the following morning I entered the drawing-room earlier than all the rest, and halted in front of Madame Éltzoff’s portrait.—“What didst thou make by it?”—I thought, with a secret feeling of jeering triumph,—“for here, seest thou, I have read to thy daughter a forbidden book!” All at once, it seemed to me probably thou hast noticed that eyes painted *en face* always seem to be riveted straight on the spectator? . . . But on this oc-

“ FAUST ”

casion, it really did seem to me as though the old lady had turned them on me reproachfully.

I turned away, walked to the window, and beheld Vyéra Nikoláevna. With a parasol on her shoulder, and a thin white kerchief on her head, she was strolling in the garden. I immediately went out and bade her good morning. . . .

“ I have not slept all night,”—she said to me; —“ I have a headache; I have come out into the air to see if it will not pass off.”

“ Can it have been caused by last night’s reading?”—I asked.

“ Of course it was; I am not used to that. There are things in that book of yours which I cannot get rid of; it seems to me that they are fairly searing my brain,”—she added, laying her hand on her brow.

“ Very good indeed,”—said I:—“ but this is the bad thing about it: I’m afraid this sleeplessness and headache have destroyed your wish to read such things.”

“ Do you think so?”—she returned, breaking off a spray of wild jasmine as she passed.—“ God knows! It seems to me that any one who has entered upon that road cannot turn back.”

She suddenly flung aside the spray.

“ Let us go and sit in that arbour,”—she went on,—“ and until I speak to you of it myself, please do not remind me of that book.”

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(She seemed to be afraid to pronounce the name of “Faust.”)

We entered the arbour and seated ourselves.

“I will not talk to you about ‘Faust,’” I began;—“but you must allow me to congratulate you, and to tell you that I envy you.”

“You envy me?”

“Yes; as I know you now, with your soul, how much enjoyment you have in store! There are other great poets besides Goethe: Shakspeare, Schiller yes, and our own Púshkin and you must make acquaintance with them also.”

She maintained silence, and drew figures on the sand with her parasol.

Oh, my friend, Semyón Nikoláitch! if thou couldst but have seen how charming she was at that moment! Pale almost to transparency, slightly bent forward, weary, inwardly distraught,—and nevertheless serene as the sky! I talked, talked a long time, then fell silent—and sat there silently watching her. . . .

She did not raise her eyes, and continued now to sketch with her parasol, now to erase what she had drawn. Suddenly the sound of brisk, childish footsteps resounded: Natásha ran into the arbour. Vyéra Nikoláevna straightened herself up, rose, and, to my amazement, embraced her daughter with a sort of impulsive tenderness. . . . This was not her habit. Then Priímkoﬀ made his appearance. That grey-haired but

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punctual, fine fellow Schimmel had gone away before daybreak, in order not to miss his lesson. We went to drink tea.

But I am tired; it is time to bring this letter to an end. It must seem silly, confused to thee. I feel confused myself. I am out of sorts. I don't know what ails me. There is constantly flitting before my vision a tiny room with bare walls, a lamp, an open door, the scent and freshness of night, and there, near the door, an attentive young face, thin, white garments. . . . I understand now why I wanted to marry her; evidently, I was not so stupid before my trip to Berlin as I have hitherto thought. ' Yes, Semyón Nikoláitch, your friend is in a strange frame of mind. All this will pass off, I know . . . but what if it should not pass off—well, what then? I am satisfied with myself, nevertheless; in the first place, I have spent a wonderful evening; and in the second place, if I have awakened that soul, who can blame me? Old Madame Éltzoff is nailed to the wall and must hold her peace. The old lady! I do not know all the particulars of her life; but I do know that she eloped from her father's house; evidently, she was not born of an Italian mother for nothing. She wanted to insure her daughter. We shall see.

I fling aside my pen. Thou, jeering man, please to think of me as thou wilt, but don't

“FAUST”

make fun of me by letter. Thou and I are old friends, and must spare each other. Farewell!

Thine,

P. B.

FIFTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, July 26, 1850.

I HAVE not written to thee for a long time, my dear Semyón Nikoláitch; not for more than a month, I think. There has been plenty to write about; but I have been too lazy. To tell the truth, I have hardly thought of thee during the whole of that time. But I may deduce from thy last letter to me that thou art making assumptions about me which are unjust; that is to say, not quite just. Thou thinkest that I am carried away by Vyéra (somehow, I find it awkward to call her Vyéra Nikoláevna); thou art mistaken. Of course, I see her frequently; I like her extremely and who would not like her? I should just like to see thee in my place. She's a wonderful creature! Instantaneous penetration hand in hand with the inexperience of a baby; clear, sound sense and innate feeling for beauty, a constant striving for the truth, for the lofty, and a comprehension of everything, even of the vicious, even of the ridiculous—and, over all this, like

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the white wings of an angel, gentle feminine charm. . . . But what 's the use of talking! We have read a great deal, discussed a great deal, she and I, in the course of this month. To read with her is a delight such as I have not hitherto experienced. It is as though one were opening fresh pages. She never goes into raptures over anything; everything noisy is alien to her; she quietly beams all over when anything pleases her, and her face assumes such a noble, good precisely that, good expression. From her earliest childhood Vyéra has never known what it is to lie; she has become accustomed to the truth, she is redolent of it, and therefore in poetry the truth alone appears natural to her; she immediately recognises it, without difficulty, as a familiar face a great advantage and happiness! It is impossible not to hold her mother in kindly memory for that. How many times have I thought, as I looked at Vyéra: “ Yes, Goethe is right:—‘ a good man in his obscure aspirations always feels where the true road lies.’ ”¹ One thing is vexatious; her husband is always hanging around. (Please don't indulge in your stupid laugh, don't sully our friendship by even so much as a thought.) He is as capable of understanding poetry as I am of playing the flute, and he won't leave his wife; he wants to be enlightened also. Sometimes she

¹ “ Faust,” the Prologue to Part I.

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herself puts me out of patience: a queer sort of mood will suddenly come over her; she will neither read nor converse; she works at her embroidery-frame, and fusses with Natásha, with the housekeeper, suddenly runs off to the kitchen, or simply sits with folded hands and stares out of the window, or sets to playing “ fool ”¹ with the nurse. . . . I have observed that on such occasions I must not worry her, but that it is best to wait until she herself approaches me, and starts a conversation, or takes up a book. She has a great deal of independence, and I am very glad of that. Dost thou remember how, in the days of our youth, some young girl or other would repeat to thee thy own words, to the best of her ability, and thou wouldst go into raptures over that echo and, probably, bow down before it, until thou didst get an inkling of the real state of the case? But this woman . . . no; she thinks for herself. She will accept nothing on faith; one cannot frighten her by authority; she will not dispute; but she will not give in. She and I have argued over “ Faust ” more than once; but—strange to say!—she never says anything about Gretchen herself, but merely listens to what I say of her. Mephistopheles alarms her, not as the devil, but as “ something which may exist in every man. . . . ” Those are her very words. I undertook to explain to her that

¹ A Russian card-game. — TRANSLATOR.

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we called that “ something ” reflex action; but she did not understand the words “ reflex action ” in the German sense; she knows only the French “ *réflexion*, ” and has become accustomed to consider it useful.

Our relations are remarkable! From a certain point of view I may say that I have great influence over her, and am educating her, as it were; but without herself being aware of the fact, she is transforming many things in me for the better. For example, it is solely due to her that I have recently discovered what an immense amount of the conventional, the rhetorical there is in the finest, the most famous poetical productions. That to which she remains cold becomes at once suspicious in my eyes. Yes, I have grown better, more serene. To be intimate with her, to meet her, and remain the same man as before is an impossibility.

“ What is to be the upshot of all this? ” thou wilt ask. Why, really, nothing, I think. I am passing my time very agreeably until September, and then I shall go away. Life will seem dark and tedious to me during the first months. . . . But I shall get used to it. I know how dangerous is any sort of a tie between a man and a young woman, how imperceptibly one feeling is replaced by another. . . . I would have managed to wrench myself away, had I not known that both of us are perfectly calm. Truth to

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tell, one day something strange happened with us. I know not how, and as a result of what—I remember that we were reading “Onyégin”¹—and I kissed her hand. She recoiled slightly, riveted a glance upon me (I have never beheld such a glance in any one but her; it contains both pensiveness and attention, and a sort of severity) . . . suddenly blushed, rose, and left the room. I did not succeed in being alone with her again that day. She avoided me, and for four mortal hours played with her husband, the nurse, and the governess at “Trumps.” The next morning she suggested that we should go into the garden. We walked the whole length of it, clear to the lake. Suddenly she whispered softly, without turning toward me: “Please don’t do that again!”—and immediately began to narrate something to me. . . . I was very much abashed.

I must confess that her image never leaves my mind, and I probably have begun to write this letter to thee more with the object of securing the possibility of thinking and talking about her, than anything else. I hear the neighing and trampling of horses: it is my calash being brought round. I am going to their house. My coachman no longer asks me whither he shall drive when I take my seat in the equipage,—he drives straight to the Priímkoſſ’s’.

¹ Púshkin’s poem, “Evgény Onyégin.”—TRANSLATOR.

“ FAUST ”

Two versts distant from their village, at a sharp turn of the road, their manor-house suddenly peers forth from behind a birch-grove. . . . Every time my heart leaps with joy as soon as the windows of her house gleam forth. Schimmel (that harmless old man comes to them occasionally; they have seen the family of Prince X*** only once, thank God!) Schimmel says, not without cause, with the modest triumph peculiar to him, as he points to the house where Vyéra dwells: “That is the abode of peace!” The angel of peace has taken up its abode in that house. . . .

Cover me with thy pinions,
My heart's emotion allay,—
And blessed shall be that shadow
For my enchanted soul. . . .

But come, enough of this,—or God knows what thou wilt think,—until the next time. . . . What shall I write the next time?—Good-bye!—By the way, she will never say “good-bye,” but always: “Well, good-bye.”—I like that awfully.

Thine,

P. B.

P. S.—I don't remember whether I have told thee that she knows I proposed for her hand.

SIXTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, August 10, 1850.

CONFESS that thou art expecting either a despairing or a rapturous letter from me. . . . Nothing of the sort. My letter will be like all letters. Nothing new has happened, and nothing can happen, I think. The other day we were rowing in a boat on the lake. I will describe that jaunt to thee. There were three of us: she, Schimmel and I. I cannot understand what possesses her to invite that old man so often. The X***s are put out with him, they say, because he has begun to neglect his lessons. But on this occasion he was amusing. Priímkoff did not go with us: he had a headache. The weather was magnificent, cheerful; there were huge white ragged-looking storm-clouds all over the blue sky; everywhere there was a gleam, a rustling in the trees, a plashing and rippling of the water on the shores; on the waves darting golden serpents of light, coolness and sunshine!—At first I and the German rowed; then we raised the sail and dashed headlong onward. The bow of the boat fairly dived through the waves, and the wake behind the stern hissed and foamed. She sat at the helm and steered; she had tied a kerchief over her head: a hat

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would have blown off; her curls burst forth from beneath it, and floated softly on the breeze. She held the helm firmly with her sun-burned little hand, and smiled at the splashes of water which flew in her face from time to time. I curled myself up in the bottom of the boat, not far from her feet, the German pulled out his pipe, lighted up his coarse tobacco, and—just fancy!—began to sing in a fairly agreeable bass voice. First he sang the old ballad: “*Freut' euch des Lebens,*” then an aria from “The Magic Flute,” then a romance entitled “Love’s Alphabet”—“*Das A-B-C der Liebe.*” In this romance the whole alphabet is recited,—with appropriate quaint sayings, of course,—beginning with: “*Ah, Bay, Say, Day,—Wenn ich dich seh!*” and ending with “*Oo, Fau, Vay, Eeks,—Mach einen Knicks!*” He sang all the couplets through with tender expression; but thou shouldst have seen how roguishly he screwed up his left eye at the word “*Knicks*”!—Vyéra burst out laughing and shook her finger at him. I remarked that it struck me Herr Schimmel had been no fool in his day. “Oh, yes, I could stand up for myself!” he replied pompously, knocking the ashes out of his pipe into his palm; and thrusting his fingers into his tobacco-pouch, he gripped the mouthpiece of his pipe swaggeringly, on one side, with his teeth. “When I was a student,”—he added,—“o-ho-ho!” He said no more. But what an “o-ho-ho!”

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that was!—Vyéra requested him to sing some student song, and he sang to her: “ *Knaster, den gelben,*” but got out of tune on the last note.

In the meantime, the wind had increased, the waves had begun to run rather high, the boat careened over somewhat; swallows were darting low around us. We put the sail over and began to jibe. The wind suddenly veered about; we had not succeeded in completing the manœuvre, when a wave dashed over the side, and the boat took in a quantity of water. Here, also, the German showed himself to be a fine fellow; he snatched the sheet-rope from my hand, and jibed in proper fashion, remarking, as he did so: “ That ’s the way they do at Kuxhafen!”—“ *So macht man’s in Kuxhafen!* ”

Vyéra was probably frightened, for she turned pale; but, according to her wont, she did not utter a word, but gathered up her gown and placed her feet on the thwart of the boat. Suddenly there flashed across my mind Goethe’s poem (I have been thoroughly infected by him for some time past) dost thou remember it? “ On the waves twinkle thousands of quivering stars ”; and I recited it aloud. When I reached the line: “ Mine eyes, why do ye droop? ” she raised her eyes a little (I was sitting lower than she: her glance fell upon me from above) and gazed for a long time into the far distance, narrowing her eyes to protect them from the

wind. . . . A light rain came up in an instant, and pattered in bubbles on the water. I offered her my overcoat; she threw it over her shoulders. We landed on the shore,—not at the wharf,—and went to the house on foot. I walked arm in arm with her. All the time I felt like saying something to her; but I held my peace. But I remember asking her why, when she was at home, she always sat under the portrait of Madame Éltzoff, just like a birdling under its mother’s wing.—“ Your comparison is very accurate,”—she replied:—“ I should never wish to emerge from beneath her wing.”—“ Would n’t you like to emerge into freedom? ”—I asked another question. She made no reply.

I do not know why I have told thee about this expedition,—perhaps because it has lingered in my memory as one of the brightest events of recent days, although, in reality, how can it be called an event? I was so delighted and speechlessly happy, and tears—light, happy tears—fairly gushed from my eyes.

Yes; just fancy! On the following day, as I was strolling through the garden, past the arbour, I suddenly heard an agreeable, ringing, feminine voice singing, “ *Freut’ euch des Lebens.* ” . . . I glanced into the arbour:—it was Vyéra.

“ Bravo! ”—I exclaimed;—“ I was not aware that you had such a fine voice! ”—She was abashed, and stopped singing. Seriously, she has

an excellent, strong soprano voice. But I don't believe she even suspected that she had a good voice. How many untouched treasures are still concealed in her! She does not know herself. But such a woman is a rarity in our day, is she not?

August 12.

WE had a very strange conversation yesterday. First we talked about visions. Just imagine; she believes in them, and says that she has her reasons for so doing. Priímkoff, who was sitting with us, dropped his eyes and shook his head, as though in confirmation of her words. I tried to interrogate her; but speedily perceived that the conversation was disagreeable to her. We began to talk about imagination, about the force of imagination. I narrated how, in my youth, being in the habit of dreaming a great deal about happiness (the customary occupation of people who have not had, or will not have luck in life), I had, among other things, dreamed of what bliss it would be to pass a few weeks in Venice with the woman I loved. I thought of this so often, especially at night, that I gradually formed in my mind a complete picture, which I could summon up before me at will: all I had to do was to shut my eyes. This is what presented itself to me:—Night, the moon, white and tender moonlight, fragrance the fragrance of the orange-flower, thinkest thou? No, of vanilla,

“ FAUST ”

the fragrance of the cactus, a broad watery expanse, a flat island overgrown with olive-trees; on the island, on the very shore, a small marble house, with wide-open windows; music is audible—whence, God knows; in the house are trees with dark foliage, and the light of a half-veiled lamp; a heavy velvet mantle with golden fringe has been thrown over one window-sill, and one end of it is trailing in the water; while, side by side, with their arms resting on the mantle, sit *he* and *she*, gazing far away to the spot where Venice is visible.—All this presented itself to me as plainly as though I had beheld it all with my own eyes.

She listened to my nonsense, and said that she also often indulged in reverie, but that her dreams were of a different nature: she either imagined herself on the plains of Africa, with some traveller or other, or hunting for the traces of Franklin in the Arctic Ocean; she vividly pictured to herself all the hardships which she must undergo, all the difficulties with which she must contend. . . .

“Thou hast read a quantity of travels,”—remarked her husband.

“Perhaps so,”—she rejoined. “But if one is to dream, what possesses one to dream of the impossible?”

“But why not?”—I interposed.—“How is the poor impossible to blame?”

“ FAUST ”

“ I did not express myself correctly,”—said she:—“ I meant to say, what possesses a person to dream of himself, of his own happiness? There is no use in thinking about it; if it does not come,—why pursue it? It is like health: when one does not notice it, it means that one possesses it.”

These words amazed me. That woman has a great soul, believe me. . . . From Venice the conversation passed to Italy, to the Italians. Priímkoff left the room, and Vyéra and I were left alone.

“ There is Italian blood in your veins also,”—I remarked.

“ Yes,”—she responded:—“ I will show you the portrait of my grandmother, if you wish.”

“ Pray do.”

She went into her boudoir and brought thence a rather large gold locket. On opening this locket, I beheld a splendidly-painted miniature portrait of Madame Éltzoff’s father and his wife, —that peasant from Albano. Vyéra’s grandfather surprised me by his likeness to his daughter. Only his features, rimmed with a white cloud of powder, appeared still more severe, still more sharp and pointed, and in his little, yellow eyes gleamed a sort of surly stubbornness. But what a face the Italian girl had! sensual, open like a full-blown rose, with big, prominent, humid eyes, and conceitedly-smiling, rosy lips! The

thin, sensitive nostrils seemed to be quivering, and inflating, as after recent kisses; from her dark-skinned cheeks sultry heat and health seemed to emanate, and the splendour of youth, and feminine force. . . . That brow had never thought, and God be thanked for that! She was depicted in her Albanian costume; the artist (a master) had placed a spray of vine-leaves in her hair, which was black as pitch, with bright-grey reflections. Nothing could have been better suited to the expression of her face than that bacchantic decoration. And knowest thou, of whom that face reminded me? Of my Manon Lescaut in the black frame. And, what is most astonishing of all: as I gazed at that portrait, I recalled the fact that something resembling that smile, that glance, sometimes flits over Vyéra's face, despite the utter dissimilarity of the outlines. . . .

Yes, I repeat it: neither she herself nor any one else in all the world knows what lies hidden within her. . . .

By the way! Madame Éltzoff, before her daughter's marriage, related to her the story of her whole life, the death of her mother, and so forth, probably with the object of edification. That which had a particular effect upon Vyéra, was what she heard about her grandfather, about that mysterious Ladánoff. Is it not from him that she inherits her faith in visions? Strange! she herself is so pure and bright, yet she is afraid

“ FAUST ”

of everything gloomy, subterranean, and believes in it. . . .

But enough. Why write all this? However, since it is already written, I 'll just send it off to thee.

Thine,

P. B.

SEVENTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, August 22.

I TAKE up my pen ten days after the date of my last letter. . . . Oh, my friend, I can no longer dissimulate. . . . How painful it is to me! How I love her! Thou canst imagine with what a bitter shudder I write this fateful word. I am no boy, not even a stripling; I am no longer at the age when it is almost impossible to deceive another person, while it costs no effort at all to deceive one's self. I know everything, and I see clearly. I know that I am close on forty years of age, that she is the wife of another, that she loves her husband; I know very well that I have nothing to expect from the unfortunate sentiment which has taken possession of me, save secret torments and definitive waste of my vital forces,—I know all this, I hope for nothing and I desire nothing. But I am no more at my ease for all that.

“FAUST”

A month ago I began to notice that my attachment for her was becoming stronger and stronger. That partly disconcerted me, partly delighted me. . . . But could I have expected that all that would be repeated in me from which, as in youth, there is no return? But what am I saying! I never have loved thus, no, never! Manon Lescaut, the Frétilions—those were my idols. It is easy to shatter such idols; but now and only now have I learned what it means to love a woman. I am ashamed even to speak of it; but so it is. I am ashamed. . . . Love is egoism, nevertheless; but at my age, egoism would be unpardonable: one cannot live for himself at seven-and-thirty; one must live usefully, with the object of fulfilling one's duty, doing one's business. And I have tried to set to work. . . . And lo, everything has been dissipated again, as by a hurricane! Now I understand what I wrote to thee in my first letter; I understand what trial I lacked. How suddenly this blow has descended upon my head! I stand and gaze irrationally ahead: a black curtain hangs just in front of my eyes; my soul aches and is affrighted! I can restrain myself, I am outwardly calm, not only in the presence of others, but even when I am alone; really, I cannot go into a rage, like a boy! But the worm has crawled into my heart, and is gnawing it day and night. How is this thing going to end? Hitherto I have languished and been agi-

“ FAUST ”

tated in her absence, while in her presence I have instantly calmed down. . . . Now I am uneasy in her presence—that is what alarms me. Oh, my friend, how painful a thing it is to be ashamed of one's tears, to conceal them! Only youth is permitted to weep; tears become it alone. . . .

I cannot read over this letter; it has burst from me like a groan. I can add nothing, narrate nothing. . . . Give me time: I shall come to myself. I shall regain control of my soul, I shall talk with thee like a man, but now I should like to lean my head on thy breast and

O Mephistopheles! Even thou wilt not help me! I have intentionally lingered over, I have intentionally irritated the ironical vein in myself; I have reminded myself how ridiculous and hypocritical these complaints, these effusions, will appear to me a year, half a year hence. . . . No, Mephistopheles is powerless, and his teeth have grown blunt. . . . Farewell.

Thine,

P. B.

“ FAUST ”

EIGHTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, September 8, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND, SEMYÓN NIKOLÁITCH:

Thou hast taken my last letter too much to heart. Thou knowest how much inclined I have always been to exaggerate my feelings; I do it quite involuntarily: a feminine nature! That will pass off, with years, it is true; but I must admit, with a sigh, that up to the present time, I have not corrected myself. And, therefore, reassure thyself. I will not deny the impression which Vyéra has made upon me; but, nevertheless, I will say: there was nothing remarkable in all that. It is not in the least necessary that thou shouldst come hither, as thou writest that thou art intending to do. To gallop more than a thousand miles, God knows for what—why, that would be madness! But I am very grateful to thee for this new proof of thy friendship, and, believe me, I shall never forget it. Thy journey hither is ill-judged also because I myself intend soon to set off for Petersburg. Seated on thy divan, I will relate to thee many things; but now, really, I do not feel like it: the first thing you know, I shall get to chattering too much, and become entangled again. I will write to thee again

“ FAUST ”

before my departure. So then, farewell until we meet shortly. May health be thine, and cheerfulness, and do not worry too much over the fate of —thine sincerely,

P. B.

NINTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, March 10, 1853.

I HAVE not answered thy letter for a long time; I have been thinking of thee all these days. I have felt that thou wert prompted not by idle curiosity, but by genuine friendly sympathy; but still I have hesitated: whether I ought to follow thy advice, whether I ought to comply with thy wish. At last I have reached a decision; I will tell thee all. Whether my confession will relieve me, as thou assumest, I do not know; but it seems to me that I should remain culpable even if alas! still more culpable toward that unforgettable, charming spirit, if I did not confide our sad secret to the only heart which I still prize. Thou alone, possibly, on earth dost remember Vyéra, and that thou shouldst judge of her light-mindedly and falsely, is what I cannot permit. Then know all! Alas! it can all be imparted in two words; that which existed between us flashed for a moment, like the lightning, and,

“ FAUST ”

like the lightning, carried death and destruction with it. . . .

Since her death, since I settled down in this remote nook, which I shall never leave again to the end of my days, more than two years have passed, and everything is as clear in my memory, my wounds are still as fresh, my grief is as bitter as ever. . . .

I will not complain. Complaints, by irritating, alleviate sorrow, but not mine. I will begin my narration.

Dost thou remember my last letter—that letter in which I undertook to dissipate thy fears and dissuade thee from leaving Petersburg? Thou wert suspicious of its constrained ease, thou hadst no faith that we should soon see each other: thou wert right. On the eve of the day when I wrote to thee, I had learned that I was beloved.

As I trace these words I discover how difficult it will be for me to pursue my narration to the end. The importunate thought of her death will torture me with redoubled force, these memories will sear me. . . . But I shall try to control myself, and I will either discard my pen, or I will not utter a superfluous word.

This is how I learned that Vyéra loved me. First of all, I must tell thee (and thou wilt believe me), that up to that day I positively had not had a suspicion. She had, it is true, begun to be pensive at times, which had never been the case

“FAUST”

with her previously; but I did not understand why this happened to her. At last, one day, the seventh of September,—a memorable day for me,—this is what occurred. Thou knowest how I loved her, how I was suffering. I wandered like a ghost, I could find no place of rest. I tried to remain at home, but could not endure it, and went to her. I found her alone in her boudoir. Priimkoff was not at home: he had gone off hunting. When I entered Vyéra's room, she looked intently at me, and did not respond to my greeting. She was sitting by the window; on her lap lay a book: it was my “Faust.” Her face expressed weariness. She requested me to read aloud the scene between Faust and Gretchen, where she asks him whether he believes in God. I took the book and began to read. With her head leaning against the back of her chair, and her hands clasped on her breast, she continued to gaze at me in the same intent manner as before.

I do not know why my heart suddenly began to beat violently.

“What have you done to me?”—she said in a lingering voice.

“What?”—I ejaculated in confusion.

“Yes; what have you done to me?”—she repeated.

“Do you mean to ask,”—I began:—“why have I persuaded you to read such books?”

“ FAUST ”

She rose in silence, and left the room. I stared after her.

On the threshold she halted and turned toward me.

“ I love you,”—said she:—“ that is what you have done to me.”

The blood flew to my head. . . .

“ I love you, I am in love with you,”—repeated Vyéra.

She went away, and shut the door behind her. I will not describe to thee what went on in me then. I remember that I went out into the garden, made my way into its thickets, and leaned against a tree. How long I stood there I know not. It was as though I had swooned; the feeling of bliss surged across my heart in a billow, from time to time. . . . No, I will not talk about that. Priímkoff's voice aroused me from my stupor; they had sent to tell him that I had arrived. He had returned from the chase, and had hunted me up. He was surprised at finding me in the garden alone, without a hat, and he led me to the house. “ My wife is in the drawing-room,”—he said:—“ let us go to her.” Thou canst conjecture with what emotions I crossed the threshold of the drawing-room. Vyéra was sitting in one corner, at her embroidery-frame. I darted a covert glance at her, and for a long time thereafter, did not raise my eyes. To my amazement, she appeared to be calm; there was no tremor per-

ceptible in what she said, in the sound of her voice. At last, I brought myself to look at her. Our glances met. . . . She blushed almost imperceptibly, and bent over her canvas. I began to watch her. She seemed perplexed, somehow; a cheerless smile now and then flitted across her lips.

Priímkoff left the room. She suddenly raised her head and asked me in quite a loud tone:

“What dost thou intend to do now?”

I was disconcerted, and hastily, in a dull voice, I replied that I intended to fulfil the duty of an honourable man—to go away, “because,”—I added,—“I love you, Vyéra Nikoláevna, as you have, probably, long since perceived.”

“I must have a talk with you,”—said she:—“come to-morrow evening, after tea, to our little house . . . you know, where you read ‘Faust.’”

She said this so distinctly that even now I cannot understand how Priímkoff, who entered the room at that moment, failed to hear anything. Slowly, with painful slowness did that day pass. Vyéra gazed about her from time to time, with an expression as though she were asking herself: “Was not she dreaming?” And, at the same time, decision was written on her countenance. While I I could not recover my composure. Vyéra loves me! These words gyrated incessantly in my mind; but I did not understand them,—I understood neither myself nor her. I

“ FAUST ”

did not believe in such unexpected, such soul-disturbing happiness; with an effort I recalled the past, and I also looked and talked as in a dream. . . .

After tea, when I had already begun to meditate how I might slip unperceived out of the house, she herself suddenly announced that she wished to take a stroll, and proposed to me that I should accompany her. I dared not begin the conversation, I could barely draw my breath, I waited for her first word, I waited for an explanation; but she maintained silence. In silence we reached the little Chinese house, in silence we entered it, and there—to this day I do not know, I cannot comprehend how it came about—but we suddenly found ourselves in each other's arms. Some invisible force dashed me to her, and her to me. By the dying light of day, her face, with its curls tossed back, was illuminated for a moment by a smile of self-forgetfulness and tenderness, and our lips melted together in a kiss. . . .

This kiss was the first and the last.

Vyéra suddenly tore herself from my arms, and, with an expression of horror in her widely-opened eyes, staggered back. . . .

“ Look round,”—she said to me in a quivering voice:—“ do you see nothing? ”

I wheeled swiftly round.

“ No, nothing. But do you see any one? ”

“ I don't now, but I did.”

“ FAUST ”

She was breathing deeply and slowly.

“ Whom? What? ”

“ My mother,”—she said slowly, trembling all over.

I also shivered, as though a chill had seized me. I suddenly felt alarmed, like a criminal. And was not I a criminal at that moment?

“ Enough!”—I began.—“ What ails you? Tell me rather ”

“ No, for God’s sake, no!”—she interrupted, clutching her head.—“ This is madness. . . . I shall go out of my mind. . . . This is not to be trifled with—this is death. . . . Farewell. . . . ”

I stretched out my arms toward her.

“ Stay one moment, for God’s sake,”—I cried in an involuntary transport. I did not know what to say, and could hardly stand on my feet.—

“ For God’s sake why, this is cruel. . . . ”

She glanced at me.

“ To-morrow, to-morrow evening,”—she said: —“ not to-day, I beg of you. . . . Go away to-day Come to-morrow evening to the wicket-gate in the garden, near the lake. I shall be there, I will come. . . . I swear to thee that I will come,”—she added, with an effort, and her eyes flashed.—“ No matter who may seek to stop me, I swear it! I will tell thee all, only let me go to-day.”

And before I could utter a word, she vanished.

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Shaken to the very foundations, I remained rooted to the spot. My head was reeling. A feeling of anguish crept through the mad joy which filled my being. I glanced about me. The chamber in which I was standing, with its low vault and dark walls, seemed horrible to me.

I went out and betook myself with hasty steps to the house. Vyéra was waiting for me on the terrace; she went into the house as soon as I approached, and immediately retired to her bedroom.

I went away.

How I spent that night and the following day until the evening, I cannot describe. I remember only that I lay prone, with my face hidden in my hands, recalling her smile which had preceded the kiss, and whispering: “ Here she is, at last. . . . ”

I recalled also Madame Éltzoff’s words, which Vyéra had repeated to me. She had said to her one day: “ Thou art like ice: until thou shalt melt, thou art strong as a rock, but when thou meltest, there will not remain a trace of thee.”

And here is another thing which recurred to my memory: Vyéra and I had, somehow, got into a discussion as to what are knowledge and talent.

“ I know only one thing,”—she said:—“ how to hold my peace until the last minute.”

I had understood nothing at the time.

“ But what is the meaning of her fright? ”—I asked myself. . . . “ Did she really see Madame Éltzoff? Imagination! ”—I thought, and again surrendered myself to the emotions of anticipation.

That same day I wrote to thee—with what thoughts I shudder to recall—that artful letter.

In the evening, before the sun had set, I was standing at a distance of fifty paces from the garden gate, in a tall, thick mass of vines, on the shore of the lake. I had come from home on foot. I confess it, to my shame: terror, the most pusillanimous terror filled my breast, I kept trembling incessantly but I felt no remorse. Concealing myself among the branches, I stared fixedly at the gate. It did not open. The sun set, darkness descended: the stars had already come out, and the sky had grown black. No one appeared. Fever seized upon me. Night came. I could endure it no longer, and cautiously emerging from the vines, I crept up to the gate. Everything was quiet in the garden. I called Vyéra in a whisper, I called a second time, a third. . . . No voice responded. Another half hour, an hour elapsed; it had grown perfectly dark. Anticipation had exhausted me; I pulled the gate toward me, opened it at one movement and directed my way on tiptoe, like a thief, toward the house. I halted in the shadow of the lindens.

Almost all the windows in the house were

“ FAUST ”

lighted: people were moving to and fro in the rooms. This astonished me: my watch, so far as I could make out by the dim light of the stars, indicated half-past eleven. Suddenly a rumbling resounded on the other side of the house: an equipage had driven into the courtyard.

“ Evidently, there are visitors,”—I thought. Abandoning all hope of seeing Vyéra, I made my way out of the garden, and strode homeward with hasty steps. It was a dark September night, warm but starless. A feeling not so much of vexation as of grief, which was on the point of taking possession of me, was dissipated to a certain degree, and I arrived at my own house somewhat fatigued from my brisk walk, but soothed by the tranquillity of the night, happy and almost merry. I entered my bedroom, dismissed Timofyéi, threw myself on the bed without undressing, and plunged into reverie.

At first my musings were cheerful; but I speedily noticed a strange change in myself. I began to feel a sort of mysterious, gnawing grief, a sort of profound, inward uneasiness. I could not understand whence it proceeded; but I became alarmed, and oppressed, as though an impending misfortune were menacing me, as though some one dear to me were suffering at that moment, and were appealing to me for help. On the table a wax taper was burning with a small, motionless flame, the pendulum of the clock was ticking

“ FAUST ”

heavily and regularly. I leaned my head on my hand, and sat to staring into the empty, semi-darkness of my solitary chamber. I thought of Vyéra, and my soul ached within me: everything in which I had delighted appeared to me in its proper light, as a calamity, as ruin from which there was no escape. The feeling of anguish kept augmenting within me; I could no longer lie down; again it suddenly seemed to me as though some one were calling me with an appealing voice. . . . I raised my head and shuddered. I was not mistaken: a wailing shriek swept from afar, and clung, faintly quivering, to the window-panes. I was terrified: I sprang from the bed, and threw open the window. A plainly-audible groan burst into the room, and seemed to hover over me. It seemed as though some one's throat were being cut at a distance, and the unhappy person were entreating, in vain, for mercy. I did not stop, at the time, to consider whether it might not be an owl hooting in the grove, or whether some other creature had emitted that groan, but as Mazzeppa answered Kotchubéy, I replied with a shriek to that sound of ill-omen.

“ Vyéra, Vyéra! ”—I cried:—“ is it thou who art calling me? ”—Timofyéi, sleepy and dumb-founded, appeared before me.

I came to my senses, drank a glass of water, and went into another room; but sleep did not visit me. My heart beat painfully, although not

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frequently. I could no longer give myself up to dreams, to happiness. I no longer dared to believe in it.

On the following day, before dinner, I set off to see Priímkoff. He greeted me with a careworn face.

“ My wife is ill,”—he began:—“ she is in bed. I have sent for the doctor.”

“ What is the matter with her? ”

“ I don’t understand. Yesterday evening she started to go into the garden, but suddenly came back, beside herself, thoroughly frightened. Her maid ran for me. I came, and asked my wife, ‘ What ails thee? ’ She made no reply, and instantly took to her bed; during the night, delirium set in. God knows what she said in her delirium; she mentioned you. The maid told me an astonishing thing: it seems that Vyérotchka saw her dead mother in the garden; her mother seemed to be coming toward her with open arms.”

Thou canst imagine my sensations at these words!

“ Of course, it is nonsense,”—pursued Priím-koff:—“ but I must confess that remarkable things have happened to my wife in that line.”

“ And is Vyéra Nikoláevna very ill, pray tell me? ”

“ Yes, very; she was very bad during the night; now she is unconscious.”

“ But what did the doctor say? ”

“ FAUST ”

“ He said that the malady had not yet declared itself. . . . ”

March 12.

I CANNOT continue as I have begun, my dear friend: it costs me too much effort and irritates my wounds too greatly. The malady declared itself, to use the doctor's words, and Vyéra died of it. She did not survive a fortnight after that fatal day of our momentary tryst. I saw her once more before her end. I possess no more cruel memory. I had already learned from the doctor that there was no hope. Late at night, when every one in the house was in bed, I crept to the door of her chamber and looked at her. Vyéra was lying in bed, with closed eyes, emaciated, tiny, with the glow of fever on her cheeks. I stared at her as though I had been petrified. Suddenly she opened her eyes, fixed them on me, took a closer look, and stretching out her emaciated hand—

“ What does he want on that holy spot,
That man . . . that man yonder. . . . ”¹

she articulated in a voice so terrible, that I fled at full speed. She raved of “ Faust ” almost continuously during her illness, and of her mother, whom she called now Martha, now Gretchen's mother.

¹ “ *Was will er an dem heiligen Ort,
Der da der dort. . . .* ”

“ Faust,” Part I, Last Scene.

“ FAUST ”

Vyéra died. I was at her funeral. Since that day I have abandoned everything, and have settled down here forever.

Reflect now on what I have told thee; think of her, of that being who perished so early. How this came about, how that incomprehensible interposition of the dead in the affairs of the living is to be explained, I know not, and I shall never know; but thou must agree with me that it is no fit of capricious hypochondria, as thou expressest it, which has made me withdraw from society. All this time I have thought so much about that unhappy woman (I came near saying, “ young girl ”), about her origin, the mysterious play of Fate which we, blind that we are, designate as blind chance. Who knows how much seed is left by each person who lives on the earth, which is destined to spring up only after his death? Who can say to what mysterious end the fate of a man is bound up with the fate of his children, his posterity, and how his aspirations will be reflected in them, his mistakes visited on them? We must all submit and bow our heads before the Unknowable.

Yes, Vyéra perished, and I have remained whole. I remember, when I was still a child, there was in our house a beautiful vase of transparent alabaster. Not a fleck sullied its virgin whiteness. One day, when I was left alone, I began to rock the pedestal on which it stood The vase

suddenly fell to the floor, and was shattered to atoms. I nearly swooned with fright, and stood motionless before the fragments. My father entered the room, saw me, and said: “ Just see what thou hast done! We shall never have our beautiful vase again; there is no way to mend it now.” I burst out sobbing. It seemed to me that I had committed a crime.

I have become a man—and have heedlessly shattered a vessel which was a thousand times more precious. . . .

In vain do I tell myself that I could not have anticipated this instantaneous catastrophe, that it startled even me by its unexpectedness, that I had no suspicion as to the sort of woman Vyéra was. She really did know how to hold her peace to the last minute. I ought to have fled as soon as I felt that I loved her,—loved a married woman; but I remained,—and have shattered in fragments a very beautiful creature, and with dumb despair I now gaze upon the work of my hands.

Yes; Madame Éltzoff jealously guarded her daughter. She guarded her to the end, and at her first unwary step, she bore her off with her into the tomb.

It is time for me to make an end. . . . I have not told thee the hundredth part of what I should: but this has been quite enough for me. Let everything which has flashed up in my soul sink once more into its depths. . . . In ending, I will tell

“ FAUST ”

thee: I have brought one conviction out of the experiences of the recent years; life is not even enjoyment, . . . life is a heavy toil. Renunciation, constant renunciation,—that is its secret meaning, its solution; not the fulfilment of cherished ideas and dreams, no matter how lofty they may be,—but the fulfilment of duty,—that is what man must take heed to; not unless he imposes upon himself chains, the iron chains of duty, can he attain to the end of his course without falling; but in youth we think: “The freer the better; the further one can go.” It is permissible for youth to think thus; but it is disgraceful to console one’s self with an illusion, when the stern face of the truth has at last looked thee full in the eye.

Farewell! Formerly I would have added: “Be happy.” Now I say to thee: Endeavour to live, it is not as easy as it seems. Remember me, not in hours of sadness, but in hours of thoughtfulness, and preserve in thy soul the image of Vyéra in all its unsullied purity. . . . Once more, farewell!

Thine,

P. B.

**AN EXCURSION TO THE
FOREST BELT**

(1857)

AN EXCURSION TO THE FOREST BELT¹

THE FIRST DAY

THE aspect of the huge pine woods which embrace the whole horizon, the aspect of the "Forest Belt," reminds one of the aspect of the sea. And the impressions evoked by both are the same: the same primeval, untouched strength lies in vast and regal expanse before the spectator. From the bosom of the eternal forests, from the deathless lap of the waters the selfsame voice arises: "I care nothing for thee,"—Nature says to man:—"I reign, but do thou bestir thyself as to the means of escaping death." But the forest is more monotonous and melancholy than the sea, especially a pine forest, which is forever the same, and almost noiseless. The sea menaces and caresses, it has a shifting play of all hues, it speaks with all voices; it reflects the sky, which also exhales eternity, but an eternity which does not seem alien to us. . . . The unchanging, gloomy pine forest maintains a surly silence, or roars dully,—and at the sight of it the consciousness of our in-

¹ A district in southwest Russia—TRANSLATOR.

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significance penetrates still more deeply and irresistibly into the heart of man.

It is difficult for a man, the creature of a single day, yesterday born and to-day doomed to death,—it is difficult for him to endure the cold gaze of the eternal Isis riveted impassibly upon him; not his bold hopes and dreams alone quiet down and become extinguished within him, encompassed by the icy breath of the elements; no—his whole soul chirps feebly and expires; and he feels that the last of his fellows may vanish from the face of the earth—and not a single needle on those branches will quiver; he feels his isolation, his impotence, his fortuitousness and with hurried, secret terror he turns his attention to the petty cares and toils of life; he is more at his ease in that world, created by himself; there he is at home, there he still dares to believe in his own importance, in his own power.

Such were the thoughts which occurred to me several years ago, when, as I stood on the porch of a tiny posting-station, erected on the bank of the marshy little Reséta, I beheld the Forest Belt for the first time. The blue masses of the ever-green forest retreated in front of me in long, serried ranks of terraces; here and there, small birch groves glimmered only as green spots; the entire field of vision was encompassed by the pine forest; no church gleamed white, no fields shone light in any direction—there was nothing but

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trees, trees, nothing but jagged crests; and a thin, dull mist, the eternal mist of the Forest Belt, hung high above them. It was not indolence, that impassivity of life, no—it was absence of life, something dead, though majestic, which breathed forth upon me from all points of the horizon. I remember that huge, white clouds sailed past, softly, and high in air, and the hot summer day lay motionless and silent on the earth. The reddish water of the little stream slipped by without a splash between the dense growth of reeds; at its bottom round hillocks of prickly moss were dimly visible, and the banks now disappeared in the swampy ooze, now shone forth with the sharp whiteness of fine, friable sand. Past the posting-station itself ran the well-beaten county highway.

On this highway, directly opposite the porch, stood a peasant-cart, laden with boxes and chests. Its owner, a gaunt petty burgher, with a hawk's-bill nose and tiny, mouse-like eyes, round-shouldered and lame, was harnessing to it his wretched nag, which was lame, like himself; he was a gingerbread pedlar, who was on his way to the Karatchyóff fair. Several persons suddenly made their appearance on the threshold; others straggled after them . . . at last, a whole throng poured forth; all of them had staves in their hands, and wallets on their backs. From their walk, which was weary and shambling, from their sunburned faces, it was evident that they came

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from afar: they were day-labourers, diggers, who were returning from a trip to earn money by harvest labour. An old man of seventy, with perfectly white hair, seemed to be acting as their leader; he turned round from time to time, and spurred on the laggards with a tranquil voice. "Come, come, come, my lads,"—he said,— "co-ome on." They all advanced in silence, in a sort of impressive tranquillity. Only one, a man of low stature, and with an angry aspect, in a sheep-pelt coat open on the breast, and a sheep-skin cap, pulled down over his very eyes, suddenly asked the gingerbread pedlar, as he came on a level with him:

"How much is gingerbread, fool?"

"That depends on the sort of gingerbread, my dear man,"—replied the astounded dealer in a shrill voice.—"I have some for a kopék—while other sorts cost two kopéks. But hast thou two kopéks in thy purse?"

"I guess it ferments in the belly,"—retorted the man in the sheepskin coat, and strode away from the cart.

"Hurry up, my lads, hurry up!"—the old man's voice made itself heard:—"It is a long way to our halting-place for the night."

"A rough lot,"—said the gingerbread pedlar, darting a sidelong glance at me, as soon as the whole throng had straggled past him; "is that the food for them?"

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And harnessing his nag with all speed, he drove down to the river, on which a small ferry-boat of planks was visible. A peasant in a white felt "shlyk" (the tall, pointed cap usual in the Forest Belt), emerged from a low earth-hut to meet him, and ferried him over to the opposite shore. The cart crawled along the rutted and gullied road, now and then emitting a squeak from one of the wheels.

I fed my horses and crossed the stream also. After crawling along for about two versts¹ through a swampy meadow, I drove, at last, on to a narrow dam at a clearing in the forest. My tarantás jolted unevenly over the round logs; I alighted and went on foot. The horses advanced at an energetic pace, snorting and tossing their heads to rid themselves of the gnats and small flies. The Forest Belt had received us into its bosom. At its border, nearest to the meadow, grew birches, aspens, lindens, maples, and oaks; then these began to occur more rarely, the thick fir woods moved up in a dense wall; further away the bare trunks of a pine wood shone red, and then again a mixed forest stretched out, overgrown below with hazel-bushes, bird-cherry, mountain-ash, and large, juicy grass. The sun's rays brilliantly illuminated the crests of the trees, and, sifting over the branches, only here and there reached the ground in pale streaks and patches

¹ A verst is two-thirds of a mile. —TRANSLATOR.

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Hardly any birds were to be heard—they are not fond of the great forests; only the mournful, thrice-repeated cry of a hoopoe, and the angry scream of a nut-bird, or a jay rang out from time to time; a reticent, always solitary rook flew across the clearing, the golden-blue of its beautiful feathers gleaming brightly. Sometimes the trees thinned out, stood further apart, there was more light ahead, the tarantás came out on a clear, sandy glade; sparse rye grew thereon in beds, noiselessly waving its pale little ears; on one side a small, ancient chapel stood out darkly with its sagging cross above a well; an invisible brook babbled peaceably, with varying and resonant sounds, as though it were flowing into an empty bottle; and then, suddenly, the road was barred by a recently-fallen birch-tree, and the forest stood round about, so aged, so lofty, so dreamy, that even the air seemed stifling. In places the clearing was all inundated with water; on both sides extended a forest morass, all green and dark, all covered with reeds and a growth of young alder-bushes; ducks kept flying upward in pairs—and strange it was to see these water-fowl flitting swiftly between the pines.—“Ga, ga, ga, ga,” a prolonged cry suddenly arose; it was a shepherd driving his flock through the smaller growth of trees; a dark-brown cow with short, sharp horns butted her way noisily through the bushes, with her big, dark eyes riveted on the hound which was

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running on in front of me; a gentle breeze wafted to me the delicate yet strong odour of burnt wood; a tiny wreath of white smoke crawled up and down far away in circular streams against the pale-blue forest air; evidently, some peasant furnished charcoal to the glass-works or a factory. The further we advanced the more dull and quiet did it grow around us. It is always silent in a pine forest, only far away, high overhead, a sort of long murmur and suppressed roar passes through the branches. . . . One drives on and on, that everlasting murmur of the forest never ceases, and his heart gradually begins to ache, and he wants to get out as speedily as possible, into a spacious place, into the light; he wants to inhale with full lungs—and that fragrant dampness and rotting oppress his breast. . . .

We drove for fifteen versts at a foot-pace, now and then breaking into a trot. I wanted to reach the village of Svyátœ, which lay in the very heart of the forest, by daylight. Twice we encountered peasants with long logs, or linden-bark, which they had stripped from the trees, in their carts.

“Is it far to Svyátœ?”—I inquired of one of them.

“No, not far.”

“How far?”

“Why, it must be about three versts.”

An hour and a half passed. We were still

driving on and on. Now again a loaded cart creaked. A peasant was walking beside it.

"How much further is it to Svyátœ, brother?"

"What?"

"How far it is to Svyátœ?"

"Eight versts."

The sun had already set when, at last, I emerged from the forest and beheld before me a small village. About twenty homesteads clung closely around an ancient church, with a single, green dome, and tiny windows, which gleamed crimson in the evening glow. It was Svyátœ. I drove into the enclosure.¹ The herd on its homeward way overtook my tarantás, and ran past, lowing, grunting, and bleating. The young girls and care-worn housewives welcomed their beasts; tow-headed little urchins chased the unruly sucking pigs with merry shouts; the dust whirled along the streets, in light clouds, and turned crimson as it rose higher in the air.

I stopped at the house of the Elder, a crafty and intelligent "forest-dweller," one of those concerning whom it is said that they can see what is going on two yards under the ground. Early on the following day, I set off, in a light cart, drawn by a pair of pot-bellied horses belonging to the peasants, with the Elder's son, and another young peasant, named Egór, on a hunt

¹ Russian villages are enclosed with a hedge, a fence, or wattled branches.—TRANSLATOR.

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for moor-cock and hazel-hens. The forest stood in a dense-blue ring along the entire rim of the sky—the cultivated fields around Svyátœ were reckoned at two hundred desyatínas,¹ no more; but we were obliged to drive for seven versts to reach the good places. The Elder's son was named Kondrát. He was a chestnut-haired, red-cheeked young lad, with a kindly and pacific expression of countenance, obliging and loquacious. He drove the horses. Egór sat beside me. I wish to say a couple of words concerning him.

He was considered the best hunter in the entire county. He had traversed all the localities for fifty versts round about, in their entire length and breadth. He rarely fired at a bird, because of scarcity of powder and shot; but it was enough for him that he had lured up a hazel-hen, and had noted the crest of a wood-snipe. Egór bore the reputation of being an upright man and a "close-mouthed fellow." He was not fond of talking, and never exaggerated the number of the game he had found—a rare trait in a hunter. He was of medium height, and gaunt; and had a pale, elongated face and large, honest eyes. All his features, especially his lips, were regular, and were permanently impassive; they breathed forth imperturbable composure. He smiled slightly, and inwardly, as it were, when he uttered his words, and that quiet smile was very charming.

¹ A desyatína is equal to 2.70 acres. — TRANSLATOR.

He did not drink liquor, and worked industriously, but had no luck: his wife was constantly ailing, his children died one after the other; he had been "reduced to poverty," and was absolutely unable to get on his feet again. And it must be said, that a passion for hunting is not befitting a peasant, and he who "indulges himself with a gun" is a bad farmer.

Whether it arose from dwelling constantly in the forest, face to face with the mournful and rigorous nature of that unpopulated region, or in consequence of a special turn and type of mind, at any rate, a certain modest dignity, precisely that, dignity and not thoughtfulness,—the dignity of a stately deer,—was perceptible in all Egór's movements. In the course of his career, he had killed seven bears, after having laid in wait for them in the fields of oats. It was only on the fourth night that he made up his mind to fire on the last: the bear persisted in not standing sideways to him, and he had but one bullet. Egór had killed him just before my arrival. When Kondrát conducted me to him, I found him in his little back yard: squatted on his heels in front of the huge beast, he was cutting out the fat with a short, dull knife.

"What a fine fellow thou hast laid low!"—I remarked.

Egór raised his head and gazed first at me, then at the hound which had come with me.

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“If you have come to hunt, there are moor-cock at Móshnoe—three broods of them, and five of hazel-hens,”—he said, and turned again to his task.

It was with this Egór and with Kondrát that I set off on the following day on my hunting expedition. We drove briskly across the glade which surrounded Svyátœ, but on entering the forest, dragged along again at a walk.

“Yonder sits a wood-pigeon,” said Kondrát, suddenly turning to me:—“’t would be a good thing to knock it over.”

Egór glanced in the direction whither Kondrát was pointing, and said nothing. It was a distance of over one hundred paces to the wood-pigeon, and one cannot kill it at forty paces, such is the firmness of its feathers.

The loquacious Kondrát made a few more remarks; but not without effect did the forest stillness embrace him also: he fell silent. Only now and then exchanging words, but keeping our eyes fixed ahead, and listening to the panting and snorting of the horses, we finally reached “Móshnoe.”¹ This appellation was applied to a mighty pine forest, with a sprinkling of spruce-trees here and there. We alighted. Kondrát pushed the cart into the bushes, so that the mosquitoes might not bite the horses. Egór inspected the trigger of his gun, and crossed himself: he

¹ An adjective meaning *mighty*. — TRANSLATOR.

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never began anything without the sign of the cross.

The forest which we had entered was extremely aged. I do not know whether the Tatárs roved therein,¹ but the Russian bandits and the Lithuanians of the Troublous Time² certainly might have concealed themselves in its remote fastnesses. At a respectful distance from one another rose the mighty pines with huge, slightly-gnarled trunks of a pale-yellow hue; between them, drawn up in military array, stood others, of lesser growth. Greenish moss, all besprinkled with dead pine-needles, covered the ground; the bog-bilberry grew in dense bushes; the strong odour of its berries, resembling the perfume of musk, oppressed the breath. The sun could not penetrate through the lofty canopy of the pine-branches; but it was stifling hot and not dark in the forest, nevertheless; like huge drops of sweat, the heavy, transparent pitch oozed out and quietly trickled down the coarse bark of the trees. The motionless air, devoid of shadow and devoid of light, burned the face. All was silent; even our footsteps were not audible. We trod on the moss, as on a carpet; Egór, in particular, moved noiselessly, as though he had been a shadow; beneath his feet not even the dead

¹ During the period of the "Tatár Yoke," in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—TRANSLATOR.

² In the beginning of the seventeenth century, which ended in the election of the first Románoff Tzar.—TRANSLATOR.

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branches crackled. He walked without haste, now and then blowing his decoy-whistle; a hazel-hen soon answered, and before my very eyes dived into a thick spruce-tree; but in vain did Egór point it out to me: strain my vision as I would, I could not possibly descry it; Egór was compelled to fire at it. We also found two coveys of moor-cocks; the cautious birds rose far away, with a heavy, sharp clatter; but we succeeded in shooting three young ones.

At one *maidán*,¹ Egor suddenly came to a halt and called to me. "A bear has been trying to get water,"—he said, pointing at a broad, fresh scratch in the very centre of the pit, lined with fine moss.

"Is that a trace of his paws?"—I inquired.

"Yes; but the water had dried up. He has left his traces on that pine-tree also; he climbed it for honey. He has cut it with his claws as with a knife."

We continued to make our way into the very densest part of the forest. Egór only rarely cast a glance upward, and walked on in front calmly and confidently. I espied a tall, circular embankment, surrounded by a trench half-filled with earth.

"What is that,—a tar-pit also?"—I asked.

"No,"—replied Egór:—"a fortress of brigands used to stand here."

¹ A place where tar is distilled is called a *maidán*.

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“ Long ago? ”

“ Yes, long ago; beyond the memories of our grandfathers. And a treasure is buried here, too. But a strong malediction is placed upon it; an oath sworn on human blood.”

We proceeded about a couple of versts further. I was thirsty.

“ Sit down a bit,”—said Egór:—“ I will go for water; there is a spring hard by.”

He departed; I remained alone.

I seated myself on the stump of a felled tree, propped my elbow on my knees, and after a long silence, slowly raised my head and gazed about me. Oh, how quiet and grimly-melancholy was everything around—no, not even melancholy, but dumb, cold, and menacing at one and the same time! My heart contracted within me. At that moment, on that spot, I became conscious of the breath of death, I felt it; its proximity was almost tangible. Not a single sound quivered, not a momentary rustle arose in the motionless jaws of the pine forest which surrounded me! Again, almost in terror, I dropped my head; I seemed to have been gazing into something at which a man should not look. . . . I covered my eyes with my hand—and suddenly, as though in obedience to a mysterious command, I began to recall my whole life. . . .

Now my childhood flitted before me,—noisy and quiet, irritable and good, with hurried joys

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and swift griefs; then my youth rose up, troubled, strange, vain-glorious, with all its errors and enterprises, with disordered labour, and agitated inactivity. . . . Then also recurred to my mind the comrades of my aspirations then, like a flash of lightning by night, several bright memories gleamed then the shadows began to grow and move forward; it became darker and darker around me; the monotonous years flew past more dully and quietly—and sadness descended like a stone upon my heart. I sat motionless gazing with surprise and effort, as though I beheld my whole life before me, as though a scroll were being unrolled before my eyes. “Oh, what have I done?” my lips involuntarily uttered in a bitter whisper. “Oh, life, life, how art thou gone without a trace? How hast thou slipped out of my tightly-clenched hands? Hast thou deceived me, or have I failed to make use of thy gifts? Is it possible? This trifle, this poor handful of dusty ashes—is that all that is left of thee? This cold, impassive, useless something—is it I, the I of days gone by? What? My soul has thirsted for such full happiness, it has rejected with scorn everything petty, everything defective, it has waited: in another moment happiness will gush forth in a flood—and not a single drop has moistened the longing lips? Oh, my golden chords, ye, who quivered so sensitively, so sweetly once on a time,—I hardly heard your song ye had

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only just begun to sound, when ye broke. Or, perchance, happiness, the direct happiness of my whole life has gone by close to me, has passed me, smiling with a radiant smile—and I have failed to recognise its divine countenance? Or has it really visited me and sat on my pillow, but I have forgotten it, as though it had been a dream? As though it had been a dream,”—I repeated dejectedly. Intangible images wandered through my soul, evoking in me not precisely pity, nor yet precisely perplexity. . . . “And you,”—I thought,—“dear, familiar, vanished faces, you who have encircled me in this dead solitude, why are you so profoundly and sadly silent? From what depths have ye risen? How am I to understand your enigmatical glances? Are ye bidding me farewell, or are ye welcoming me? Oh, can it be that there is no hope, no return? Why have ye flowed from my eyes, ye scanty, belated drops? Oh, heart, to what end, wherefore, still feel pity? Strive to forget if thou desirest repose; train thyself to the submission of the last parting, to the bitter words: ‘farewell’ and ‘forever.’ Do not look back, do not remember, do not aspire thither where it is bright, where youth smiles, where joy profound flutters its azure pinions, where love, like the dew in the crimson dawn, beams with tears of rapture; look not thither where bliss dwells and faith and power—that is no place for us!”

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“Here ’s your water for you,”—rang out Egór’s resonant voice behind me:—“drink, with God’s blessing!”

I gave an involuntary start: this living speech administered a shock to me, joyously agitated my whole being. It was as though I had fallen into an unexplored, gloomy depth, where everything round about had grown still, and nothing was audible save the quiet incessant moaning of some eternal grief . . . as though I were dying, but could not offer resistance; and suddenly a friendly call had reached my ear, and some one’s mighty hand had brought me forth, with one upward sweep, into God’s daylight. I glanced round, and, with unspeakable delight, perceived the honest and composed face of my guide. He was standing before me in a light and stately pose, with his wonted smile, reaching out to me a small, damp bottle, all filled with fresh water. . . . I rose.

“Let us go on, guide me,”—I said with enthusiasm.

We set out and roved about for a long time, until evening. As soon as the midday heat “held up,” it began to grow cold and dark in the forest so swiftly that one no longer felt any inclination to remain in it. “Begone, ye uneasy mortals,” it seemed to be whispering to us in surly wise from behind every pine. We made our way out, but did not soon find Kondrát. We shouted,

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called him by name, but he did not respond. Suddenly, in the midst of the wonderful stillness of the air, we heard his "whoa! whoa!"—ring out in a ravine close at hand. . . . He had not heard our shouts because of the wind which had suddenly sprung up, and as suddenly completely died away. Only on trees which stood apart could the traces of its gusts be seen: it had turned many leaves wrong side out, and so they remained, imparting a motley appearance to the motionless foliage.

We climbed into the cart and rolled off homeward. I sat swaying to and fro and quietly inhaling the damp, rather keen air, and all my recent visions and regrets were engulfed in one sensation of dreaminess and fatigue, in one desire to return as promptly as possible under the roof of a warm house; to drink tea with thick cream; to burrow into the soft, porous hay and sleep, sleep, sleep. . . .

THE SECOND DAY

ON the following morning, we three again betook ourselves to the Burnt District. Ten years previously, several thousand desyatínas had been burned over in the Forest Belt, and up to the present time it had not been covered with a new growth of trees; here and there young firs and pines are springing up, but with that exception,

there is nothing but moss and ashes rendered worthless by long lying. On this Burnt District, which is reckoned as lying twelve versts from Svyátœ, grow all sorts of berries in great quantities, and woodcock, which are extremely fond of strawberries and red bilberries, breed there.

We were driving along in silence, when suddenly Kondrát raised his head.

“Eh!”—he exclaimed:—“why, I do believe ’t is Efrém standing yonder. Morning, Alexándritch,”—he added, raising his voice, and lifting his cap.

A peasant of short stature, in a short, black peasant-coat girt with a rope, stepped out from under a tree and approached the cart.

“Did they release thee?”—inquired Kondrát.

“I should think they did!”—returned the peasant, displaying his teeth in a grin.—“It is n’t convenient to hold fellows like me.”

“And is Piótr Philíppitch all right?”

“Philíppoff is it? We know our business, he ’s all right.”

“You don’t say so! Why, Alexándritch, I was thinking; ‘come, brother,’ I was thinking, ‘now lie down on the frying-pan, goose!’”

“About Piótr Philíppoff is it? Not much! We ’ve seen his like before. He tries to play the wolf, but he has a dog’s tail.—Art thou going a-hunting, master?”—the little peasant suddenly inquired, swiftly turning up to me his little,

puckered-up eyes, and immediately dropping them again.

“ Yes.”

“ And where, for example? ”

“ To the Burnt District,”—said Kondrát.

“ You ’re going to the Burnt District; look out that you don’t drive into a conflagration.”

“ Why, what dost thou mean? ”

“ I have seen a lot of moor-cock,”—went on the little peasant, as though jeering and without replying to Kondrát,—“ but you won’t hit on the place; it is a good twenty versts off in a bee-line. And there ’s Egór—there ’s no denying it! he ’s as much at home in the pine forest as in his own yard, but even he won’t make his way thither. Morning, Egór, thou God’s soul worth one kopék,”—he suddenly bellowed.

“ Morning, Efrém,”—returned Egór deliberately.

I stared with curiosity at this Efrém. It was a long time since I had seen so strange a face. He had a long, sharp nose, big lips, and a scanty beard. His blue eyes fairly darted about like fireworks. He stood in a free-and-easy attitude, with his arms set lightly akimbo, and did not doff his cap.

“ Art on a visit home, pray? ”—Kondrát asked him.

“ Exh-sta! on a visit! ’T is not the weather now for that, brother. I ’ve been on a spree.

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I' ve been cutting a dash, brother, that 's what. Thou mayest lie on the stove until winter, and not a single dog will sneeze. That superintendent yonder in the town said to me: ' Leave us, Alexándritch,' says he, ' go away out of the country; we 'll give thee a first-class passport but I'm sorry for thy Svyátoe folks: they can't produce another such thief as thou.' ”

Kondrát broke out laughing.

“ Thou art a jester, little uncle, a regular jester,”—he said, giving the reins a shake. The horses started on.

“ Whoa!”—said Efrém. The horses came to a standstill. Kondrát did not like this sally.

“ Stop thy insolence, Alexándritch,”—he remarked in an undertone. “ Dost thou not see that we are driving a gentleman? He 'll get angry, the first thou knowest.”

“ Ekh, thou sea-drake! What is there for him to get angry about? He 's a kind gentleman. Just see now, he 'll give me some money for vodka. Ekh, master, give the wayfarer the price of a dram! I 'll dispose of it,”—he caught himself up, elevating his shoulder to his ear, and gnashing his teeth.

I involuntarily smiled, gave him a ten-kopék piece, and ordered Kondrát to drive on.

“ Much obliged, Your Well-born,”—shouted Efrém after us, in military fashion.¹ “ And do

¹ “ Much satisfied ” (in the plural), literally.—TRANSLATOR.

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thou, Kondrát, henceforth know from whom thou shouldst take lessons; the timid man is done for, the bold man succeeds. When thou returnest drop in to see me, dost hear? I shall have liquor on hand for three days; we 'll polish off a couple of bottles; my wife 's a shrew, the housekeeping goes as on runners. . . . Hey, white-sided magpie, carouse while thy tail is whole!"

And whistling shrilly, Efrém dived into the bushes.

"What sort of a man is he?"—I inquired of Kondrát, who, as he sat on the box, kept shaking his head as though engaged in argument with himself.

"That one, you mean?"—returned Kondrát, dropping his eyes.—"That one, you mean?" he repeated.

"Yes. Is he one of your villagers?"

"Yes; he belongs in Svyátœ. He 's the sort of a man Such another is n't to be found for a hundred versts. Such a thief and rascal—and, oh, my God! his eye fairly warps at other folks' goods. You can't get away from him even by burrowing in the earth; and as for money, for example, why, he 'll drag it out from underneath your very backbone without your noticing it."

"What a daring fellow he is!"

"Daring? Yes; he is n't afraid of anybody. Just you take a good look at him: from his phynasomy he 's a knave; you can fairly detect that

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from his nose.” (Kondrát frequently drove with gentlemen, and was in the habit of visiting the county town; consequently, he was fond, on occasion, of showing off.) “And you can’t do anything to him. Many a time they ’ve haled him to town and put him in prison,—and only loss came of it. They will begin to bind him, and he ’ll say: ‘Come now, are n’t you going to fetter that leg? Fetter it also, and as strongly as you can, and I ’ll take a nap in the meantime; but I ’ll reach home quicker than your guards.’ You look: and he really has got back, he ’s there again, akh! oh, thou my God! All of us hereabouts know the forest; we ’ve been used to it from our infancy, but we can’t compete with him. Last summer, he came by night in a bee-line from Altúkhin to Syvátoe, which must be forty versts. And as for stealing honey, he ’s a master-hand at that; and not a bee stings him. He has devastated all the bee-farms.”

“I suppose he shows no quarter to the wild hives either?”

“Well, no; why accuse him without cause? That sin has not been noticed in him. A wild hive is a sacred thing with us. A bee-farm is fenced in; there is a guard; if he purloins that,—that ’s according to luck; but a wild bee is God’s affair, not guarded; only a bear touches it.”

“That ’s because he is a bear,”—remarked Egór.

AN EXCURSION

“ Is he married? ”

“ Certainly. And he has a son. And his son will turn out a thief also! He takes after his father completely. And he ’s teaching him now. A little while ago he brought home a pot full of old five-kopék pieces,—he had stolen it somewhere, of course; he went and buried it in a glade in the forest, but returned home himself and sent his son to the glade. ‘ I won’t give thee anything to eat until thou findest the pot,’ says he; ‘ and I won’t let thee into the house.’—The son sat a whole day in the forest, and spent the night in the forest; but he found the pot. Yes, he ’s clever, that Efrém. So long as he ’s at home, he ’s an amiable man, he treats everybody: drink, eat, as much as thou wilt; and folks set up dancing at his house, and all sorts of drollery; but if he ’s at the assembly,—we have such an assembly in our village,—the best thing a man can do is not to condemn him; he ’ll come up from behind, listen, say a word, as though he were chopping something, and off he ’ll go; and ’t is a weighty word. And if he goes off into the forest, well, then look out for a catastrophe! Expect ruin. But I must say one thing, that he won’t touch his own fellow-villagers unless he ’s in a tight place himself. If he meets a Svyátœ man,—‘ Turn out, and get past me, brother,’—he ’ll shout from afar: —‘ The forest spirit has come over me: I ’m in murderous mood!’—Calamity!”

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“ But why do you pay any heed to that? Cannot the whole countryside get the better of one man? ”

“ Why, apparently they can't. ”

“ Is he a wizard, pray? ”

“ Who knows? A while ago, he got into the bee-farm of the neighbouring chanter, by night; yet the chanter was on guard himself. Well, he caught him, and gave him a good thrashing in the darkness. When he got through, Efrém says to him: ‘ And dost thou know whom thou hast thrashed? ’ And when the chanter recognised him by his voice, he was fairly dumfounded. ‘ Well, brother,’ says Efrém, ‘ thou shalt pay for this.’ The chanter fell at his feet: ‘ Take what thou wilt,’ says he.—‘ No,’ says the other, ‘ I ’ll take from thee at my own time, and what I choose.’—And what think you? From that very day, the chanter began to wander about like a shadow, just as though he had been scalded. ‘ My heart is pining away within me,’ says he: ‘ evidently, the brigand has fastened on me an awfully strong spell.’—And that ’s what happened to him, to that chanter.”

“ That chanter must be stupid,”—I remarked.

“ Stupid? And is that the way you judge? Once an order was issued to capture that same Efrém. We ’ve got such a sharp commissary of police! So ten men set out to capture Efrém. They see him coming toward them. . . . One of

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them begins to shout: 'There he is, hold him, bind him!' But Efrém goes into the forest, and cuts himself a cudgel, about two fingers thick, and leaps out again on the road, so hideous, so terrible, and commands, like a general on parade: 'On your knees!'—and down they all fall.—'And who was it,'—says he,—'that shouted,—"Hold him, bind him?"' Thou, Seryóga?' And the latter just springs to his feet, and makes off. . . But Efrém follows him and whacks him on the heels with his cudgel. . . . He stroked him for about a verst. And afterward he was always complaining: 'Ekh, I 'm vexed,' says he, 'that I did n't prevent his eating flesh for the last time before the fast.' This happened just before the fast of St. Philip. Well, and the commissary of police was soon superseded,—and that was the end of the whole matter."

"But why did they all submit to him?"

"Why! because they just did. . . ."

"He has scared all of you, and now he does what he pleases with you."

"He has scared us. . . . But he 'll scare any one you like. And he 's clever at inventions. O thou, my God!—Once I stumbled upon him in the forest, and such a healthy rain was coming down that I was about to turn aside. . . . But he looked at me, and beckoned me up so, with his hand. 'Come hither, Kondrát,' says he, 'don't be afraid. Learn from me how to live in the

forest, and what to do in a rain.' I approached him, and he was sitting under a spruce-tree and had lighted a small fire of damp branches; the smoke had caught in the spruce, and prevented the rain from dripping down. I was astonished at him. And then, here 's another thing he invented, once on a time " (and Kondrát broke into a laugh), " and amused us. Our oats were being threshed on the threshing-floor, but the men had not finished; they had not managed to rake together the last pile. Well, and so they stationed two sentries for the night; but the lads were not of the brave sort. So, they were sitting and chattering, when Efrém took and filled the sleeves of his shirt with straw, and tied the énds, and put the shirt on his head. So he crept up to the kiln in that guise, and began to show himself a little from round the corner, and thrust forth his horns. One young fellow says to the other: ' Dost see? ' — ' I see,' says the other, and suddenly uttered an exclamation only the cords of their bast-slippers burst. But Efrém gathered the oats into a sack and dragged it off to his house. He told all about it himself afterward. How he did shame them, shame those lads. . . . Truly!"

Again Kondrát burst out laughing. And Egór smiled. " Only the cords of their bast-slippers burst?" said he.

Again we all relapsed into silence. Suddenly Kondrát gave a start of alarm and sat up straight.

“Hey, good heavens!”—he exclaimed;—
 “why, I do believe there ’s a fire!”

“Where? Where?”—we asked.

“Yonder, look, straight ahead in the direction we ’re driving. . . . A fire it is. That Efrém, —Efrém predicted it. Can it be his doing, the accursed soul?”

I glanced in the direction indicated by Kondrát. In fact, two or three versts in front of us, behind a green band of low spruce-trees, a thick pillar of blue smoke was slowly rising from the earth, gradually curving and assuming the form of a cap; to the right and left of it others, smaller and whiter, were visible.

A peasant, all red in the face and perspiring, clad in nothing but his shirt, with his hair dishevelled above his frightened face, was galloping straight toward us, and with difficulty drew up his hastily-bridled horse.

“Brothers,”—he asked in a panting voice,—
 “have n’t you seen any of the forest guards?”

“No; we have n’t. What is it—is the forest on fire?”

“Yes. The people must be assembled; otherwise, it will take the direction of Trósnoe. . . .”

The peasant jerked his elbows, as he kicked the flanks of his horse with his heels. . . . It galloped off.

Kondrát also urged on his pair. We drove straight at the smoke, which spread out more and

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more widely; in places it suddenly turned black and spurted up aloft. The nearer we came, the less clear became its outlines; soon the air was all dimmed, there was a strong odour of burning, and the first pale-red tongues of flame flashed out, moving strangely and terribly among the trees.

"Well, God be thanked,"—said 'Kondrát:—"it appears to be a ground fire."

"A what?"

"A ground fire; the sort which runs along the ground. 'T is difficult to get control of an underground fire. What is one to do when the earth is burning for a whole arshin¹ down? There is but one salvation: dig trenches—and is that easy? But a ground fire is nothing. It will only shave off the grass, and burn up the dead leaves. The forest is all the better for it. But good heavens, just see, how it has struck out!"

We drove almost to the very verge of the conflagration. I alighted and walked toward it. This was neither difficult nor dangerous. The fire was running through the sparse pine forest *against* the wind; it was moving with an uneven line, or, to speak more accurately, in a dense, serrated wall of reflexed tongues. The smoke was carried away by the wind. Kondrát had told the truth; it really was a ground fire, which was merely shaving off the grass, and without flam-

¹Twenty-eight inches—the Russian yard-measure.—TRANSLATOR.

ing up was proceeding onward, leaving behind it a black and smoking, but not even smouldering, track. Sometimes, it is true, in places where the fire encountered a depression filled with a thicket and dried branches, it suddenly reared itself aloft with a certain peculiar, decidedly ominous roar, in long, billowy tufts; but it speedily subsided, and ran onward as before, lightly crackling and hissing. I even noticed more than once, how an oak-bush with dry, pendent leaves, though surrounded by the flame remained untouched; it merely got a little singed below. I must confess that I could not understand why the dry leaves did not catch fire. Kondrát explained to me that this arose from the fact that it was a ground fire, "that is to say, not an angry one."

"But it is a fire, nevertheless," I retorted. — "'T is a ground fire,"—repeated Kondrát. But although it was a ground fire, yet the conflagration produced its effect: the hares were scurrying back and forth in a disorderly sort of way, quite unnecessarily returning to the vicinity of the fire; birds got caught in the smoke, and circled about; the horses glanced about them, and snorted; the very forest seemed to be booming, —and man felt uncomfortable with the heat which suddenly struck him in the face. . . .

"What 's the use of looking at it?"—said Egór suddenly behind my back.—"Let 's go on."

"But where are we to pass through?"

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“ Turn to the left, over the dry marsh,—we can drive across.”

We turned to the left and drove over, although sometimes it was rather hard on the horses and the cart.

All day long we dragged on through the Burnt District. Just before evening (the sunset glow had not yet kindled in the sky, but the shadows of the trees already lay motionless and long; and in the grass that chill was perceptible which precedes the dew) I lay down on the road near the cart,—to which Kondrát was engaged, without haste, in harnessing the horses which had eaten their fill,—and recalled my cheerless visions of the day before. Everything round about was as still as on the preceding day; but the soul-oppressing and crowding pine forest was not there; on the tall moss, the lilac steppe-grass, the soft dust of the road, the slender boles and clean little leaves of the young birches, lay the clear and gentle light of the low-hanging, no longer sultry, sun. Everything was resting, immersed in a soothing coolness; nothing had yet fallen asleep, but everything was already preparing for the healing slumber of the evening and the night. Everything seemed to be saying to man: “ Rest, our brother; breathe lightly and do not grieve before sleep, which is near at hand.” I raised my head and beheld, at the very tip of a slender branch, one of those large flies with an emerald

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head, a long body, and four transparent wings, which the French coquettishly designate as “demoiselles,” and our guileless folk call “yokes.” For a long time, more than an hour, I did not take my eyes off it. Baked through and through by the sun, it did not stir, but only now and then turned its head from side to side, and let its raised wings palpitate . . . that is all. As I gazed at it, it suddenly seemed to me that I understood the life of nature,—understood its clear and indubitable, though for many still mysterious meaning. The slow and quiet inspiration, leisureliness and reserve of sensations and of forces, the equilibrium of health in each separate individual—that is its very basis, its irrevocable law; that is the thing on which it stands and is upheld. Everything which deviates from this level—either above or below, it makes no difference—is cast forth by it as worthless. Many insects die as soon as they know the equilibrium-destroying joy of love; an ailing wild beast plunges into the dense thickets, and expires there alone: it seems to feel that it no longer has a right to behold the sun, which is common to all, or to breathe the free air; it has not the right to live; but man, whose lot is evil in the world, whether by his own fault or through that of others, must at least know how to hold his peace.

“Come, what art thou about, Egór?”—suddenly exclaimed Kondrát, who had already man-

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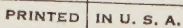
aged to mount the box of the cart, and was playing with and disentangling the reins.—“Come, take thy seat. What hast thou fallen to musing about? Still about the cow?”

“About the cow? About what cow?”—I asked, glancing at Egór. Calm and dignified as ever, he really had fallen to musing, apparently, and was gazing off somewhere into the distance, at the fields which were already beginning to grow dark.

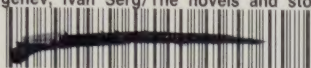
“Why, don’t you know?”—retorted Kondrát:—“his last cow died last night. He has no luck—what’s to be done?”

Egór took his seat in silence on the box, and we drove off. “That man knows how to refrain from complaining,” I thought.



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